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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXV FEBRUARY 1970 No. 2

Arise! Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

THE UNIVERSAL CALL OF RELIGIONS

One fears not death who knows
That wise, unaging, youthful Spirit,
Immortal, self-existent, undefective.

Atharva-Veda 10.8.44

To know the harmonious, is called the Eternal.
To know the Eternal, is called the enlightenment.

Tao Teh King 55.3

The soul of the righteous shall be joyful in immortality.
The torments of the liars shall be in perpetuity.
All this doth the Wise Lord appoint by His dominion.

Yasna 45.7

Earnestness is the path of immortality;
Thoughtlessness, the path of death.
Those who are in earnest, do not die;
Those who are thoughtless, are as if dead already.

Dhammapada 21

There is no man who hath left house or wife or brethren or parents or children for the Kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time and, in the world to come, eternal life.

St. Luke 18.29-30

Be ye steadfast in prayer, and give alms.
And whatsoever good ye send before for your own souls, ye shall find it with God.

Koran 2.104

> *ONWARD FOR EVER!*
>
> *Man is man so long as he is struggling to rise above nature, and this nature is both internal and external. . . . It is good and very grand to conquer external nature, but grander still to conquer our internal nature. It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the stars and planets; it is infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will, of mankind. This conquering of the inner man, understanding the secrets of the subtle workings that are within the human mind, and knowing its wonderful secrets, belong entirely to religion. Human nature—the ordinary human nature, I mean—wants to see big material facts. The ordinary man cannot understand anything that is subtle. . . . They (the masses) understand and find pleasure in everything that is external. But in every society there is a section whose pleasures are not in the senses, but beyond, and who now and then catch glimpses of something higher than matter and struggle to reach it. And if we read the history of nations between the lines, we shall always find that the rise of a nation comes with an increase in the number of such men; and the fall begins when this pursuit after the Infinite . . . has ceased. That is to say, the mainspring of the strength of every race lies in its spirituality, and the death of that race begins the day that spirituality wanes and materialism gains ground.*
>
> Vivekananda

ADVENTURES TO THE UNKNOWN

I

Daring adventure is in the blood of man. No danger or sacrifice is too great for the human spirit in its struggle for freedom, unlimited freedom, from the narrow confines, however gleaming and glittering they appear on the surface. The binding chain is a terrible bondage whether it is made of gold or iron. The lure of the broadroads of emancipation brings man out of his accumstomed ways and puts him on the unknown paths. There is something immense and infinite in man, which, scarcely satisfied with shams, is ever seeking and struggling for fulfilment. For ages, man has been on the march. Undaunted and braving the storms, he scales the mountains, plumbs the depths of seas, traverses the burning deserts and frozen wastes, and hurls himself into space. It is a fascinating story—the story of his exploits freeing him, though temporarily, from the boredom of the so-called sheltered and secure life at home.

The Babylonian epic tells of the adventures of the mighty Gilgamesh, how he wandered and sought the key to immortality possessed by Ut-napishtim, his ancestor. The Greek historian Herodotus who is called the father of history travelled along the coast of Asia Minor to the northern islands and to the shore of the Black Sea fearlessly and devoted the latter part of his life to the first comprehensive attempt at secular narrative history which has become a classic of world literature as well as starting point of Western history writing. Marco Polo's thrilling travels are recorded in his book which served as the chief Western source of information on the East during the Renaissance. Eleven years of scheming on the part of the Frenchman

René Caillié fructified in his astounding exploration of the desert stronghold of Timbuktu, alone and disguised as an Arab. Mountaineering expeditions beginning from the ascent of Mont Blanc and extending to the assault on other peaks including Mt. Everest have furnished valuable scientific data.

The expanse of sea is a sufficient attraction for man to embark on voyages on unchartered waters and to battle with a vast elemental force trying his navigational wits. The call of the waves nerves the sailors and results in many a seaman feeling at home on water as on land. The hazards of the underwater world are no deterrent to dedicated divers to enter into the dark depths and plumb the ocean bed. Nor the icy regions of the north and south polar regions could daunt man in undertaking the Arctic and Antartic expeditions and enriching his knowledge. His conquest of nature is not confined to land and water, but has extended to outer space. By far the most outstanding achievement is his bursting the bounds of terrestrial forces and landing on the moon. This is a success of the human spirit reached by dint of discipline of the human mind in liberating itself from ignorance and superstition and in subordinating fancy to reason and experimentation.

II

In the realm of thought man's adventures are far-reaching as he scales peak after peak, gaining new ground and adding to the corpus of knowledge of science, literature, philosophy and arts. Liberation of thought from the thraldom of set pattern or prejudice enlarges the scope of man's understanding and opens out to his view wider horizons of truth. Intellectual integrity carries one to the farther reaches of knowledge. The broader the generalization and formulation of law, the nearer is one to unity and universal outlook. Scientific thought extended to the extreme transcends itself. It causes little surprise to the scientist today when he moves from physics to metaphysics. The injection of the subjective, metaphysical element is evident in the natural, biological and social sciences and humanities. There is an increasing apprehension on the part of competent thinkers of the extra-mechanical and trans-empirical unity pervading and playing in the various dimensions of life.

The quest for the basic unity of existence is an adventurous and absorbing enterprise. 'What is it which being known, all this becomes known?' This is the question asked by Śaunaka in *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* (I. i. 3). This question has all along exercised the minds of men in some form or other; but the answers that are obtained are partial and unsatisfying as long as the enquiry is confined to the limits of logic, philosophy or science. It is easy for positive natural sciences to study the objects empirically without doubting their reality. When we question this reality and subject it to reasoning, we trace it to what is more real than this, and again this broader reality is explained on the basis of truth that is still more basic. The ultimate basic truth that is arrived at on the metaphysical plane by means of discursive method is a bare hypothesis of intellectual thinking. As such it stands on shaky ground unless validated by experience, direct and immediate experience of what is termed *satyasya satyam* (the Truth of truth) in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II.i. 20). All is truth no doubt, but relative truth. Some are lesser truths while others are higher ones. But the Absolute truth is the Truth of truths.

The evidences of intellectualism and rationalism are not beyond question. Mind

is not self-illuminating. It is material, depending upon victuals that we eat. It is the subtle part of the body and works when the body is nourished by good food. There is an interesting story of experimentation in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VI. 7) to illustrate this point. Uddālaka said to his son Śvetaketu, 'A person, my dear, consists of sixteen parts. For fifteen days do not eat any food, but drink water at your will. Breath which consists of water will not be cut off from one who drinks water.' For fifteen days Śvetaketu did not eat any food. Then he approached his father saying, 'What, sir, shall I say?' 'The *Ṛg* verses, my dear, the *Yajus* formulas and the *Sāman* chants.' He replied, 'They do not occur to me, Sir.' The father said to him, 'Just as, my dear, of a great lighted fire, a single coal of the size of a firefly may be left which would not thereafter burn much, even so, my dear, of your sixteen parts only one part is left and so with it you do not apprehend (remember) the Vedas. Eat. Then you will understand me.' Śvetaketu ate and approached his father. Then whatever his father asked him, he answered it all. To him, the father said, 'Just as, my dear, of a great lighted fire if a single coal of the size of a firefly is left and made to blaze up by covering it with straw and with it the fire would thereafter burn much, so, my dear, of your sixteen parts only one part was left, and that, when strengthened by food, blazed up. With it you now apprehend the Vedas. For, my dear, the mind consists of food, ...'

In view of the inadequacy of the mind, all the intellectual abstraction of the metaphysical Absolute needs to be tested by the actual realization of the transcendental, ultimate Truth which is one without a second. It is this supernal vision that should form the basis of philosophical and metaphysical analysis and interpretation. So philosophy has to get its postulates and conclusions confirmed or rejected by the evidence of actual spiritual experience.

III

Spiritual experience is not impossible of attainment, for the world has produced a galaxy of sages and saints who bear witness to it. But the ascent to it is indeed a daring and difficult adventure, an adventure which is different from the familiar ones of the physical and mental realms. The path is steep and 'sharp as the edge of a razor and hard to cross'.[1] Jesus Christ said that 'strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it'.[2] However man's spirit of seeking the unknown is invincible, setting at naught the hazards he has to encounter on the way. The dimension of his spirit is vast—deep as the ocean and wide as the sky. Nothing can deter him from his quest until he knows all, conquers everything and reaches the stage where he is free from doubt, sorrow and limitation. Nothing less than total unlimited peace and happiness sates him. This hunger for infinite, immortal bliss, is inherent in every individual irrespective of rank, riches or learning. Even the most disappointed and distressed person is looking forward to the blessed day when his desires would be gratified in an infinite measure. The thirst for infinity and eternity is lodged in every soul. Each attempt and activity towards breaking the bondages and reaching out to the distant horizons, towards endless enjoyment and fulfilment have to be reckoned as but intimations of the infinitude of the Self. It is paradoxical that there are some who are chained by the fetters that are as much unbearable as they

1 *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* I.iii.14.
2 St. Matthew 7.14.

are innumerable and who yet fight shy of spiritual endeavour.

The uniqueness of spiritual adventure is realized when one comes to know that the summit of the Self towers above the common experiences of waking, dream and deep sleep. All the knowledge and culture that we vaunt are after all confined to the waking state. The dream comes in unnoticed and uncontrolled—a bizarrerie of fantastic and grotesque images, no less real than the waking experiences as long as it lasts. What is dreamt has, more often than not, little relevance to the environment in which the dreamer is placed. For instance, in a welter of din and explosion of a battlefiled, a soldier sleeping in a nearby tent dreams of his sweet home with his wife and children, himself engaged in a peaceful pursuit, until he is awakened by his friend to the environment around. His dream breaks for good. However the truth that he enjoyed his home-life in peace during dream cannot be denied. All our analyses and insights about dream are made in the waking state only. We have no means to study it in dream itself, nor do we view the waking phenomenon from the standpoint of dream. There are however daring philosophers who question the adequacy of knowledge deduced from the data supplied by the waking world and who therefore extend their explorations to the domain of dream. To some of them, the phenomenon of dream points to a strange, unsavoury lesson—the stunning truth that the waking experiences might not be more real than those of dream. An element of evanescence in both the states is apparent to the searching mind. The dream state sets one to ponder whether waking is ephemeral like dream.

Sleep, dreamless sleep, which overpowers every individual affords another fleld of challenging study. It withdraws man from and makes him insensible, almost dead, to the external environment. He is free from the troubles and turmoils of the world; there is neither the subject nor the object. Devoid of waking and dream experiences and of subject-object relation, he exists in the non-relational state. Returning to the waking state, he feels that he has rested happily. This happy, peaceful feeling lingers. But ere long he becomes his old self, subject to trials and tribulations, to time, space and causation of the waking world. The relief from worries and anxieties that he got during sleep was only temporary. This is not to minimize the significance of its role. How overstrung would a man be if he were deprived of sleep?

Though one abhors permanent sleep, yet one likes to enjoy in the waking world the happiness of the deep sleep state to an infinite degree, on a permanent basis. This desire for unending joy, unmixed with worry and sorrow is evidently impossible of fulfilment in the three states—waking, dream, and sleep. For our experience testifies to the fact that pleasure is followed by or linked with pain. We have then either to curb our appetite for unmixed joy regarding it as a day-dream or to seek for its satisfaction somewhere else, outside the three states. The common run of men lacking in strength and spirit of adventure is content with the little joys which the world doles out in a parsimonious manner.

But the brave souls endowed with incisive intellect and indomitable strength spurn the niggardly dole and make the supreme sacrifice to reach themselves out to a region that is quite unknown to the ordinary adventurers and beyond the range of empirical calculations. Yea, these intrepid individuals land in the new realm beyond the waking, dream and sleep, explore it, enjoy the unmixed joy and peace,

find themselves freed of all the fetters of this world and discover their identity with Brahman. They have the direct and immediate experience that 'Brahman is birthless, sleepless, dreamless, nameless, formless, ever effulgent, everything and a knower'.[3] They return to this world to tell us of the glad tidings. They give us the message of 'Brahman, the Supreme, the Great hidden in all creatures according to their bodies, the One who envelops the universe; by knowing Him the Lord, men become immortal'.[4] None of them talks like the Pharisees and Sadducees. They tell us with authority as the sage Śvetāśvatara said, 'I know the Supreme Being of sunlike colour and beyond the darkness. Only by knowing Him does one pass over death. There is no other path to the Supreme Goal.'[5]

Witnesses to the great truth that man is verily Brahman, these men of Self-knowledge invite everyone irrespective of race, religion or region to undertake the spiritual adventure, cross the ocean infested with the sharks of sorrow, delusion and death, and reach the shore of self-fulfilment in this human life. None is disqualified, for everyone is potentially divine, even he who is degraded and despised. In the saint there is a greater manifestation of the Divinity whereas in the sinner lesser manifestation. The former takes to the short cut consciously while the latter traverses the longer path to reach the goal unknowingly. That is all the difference—a difference in degree, not in kind. Brahman which is the goal of spiritual adventure is the Greatest of the great, without parallel and incomparable; man in essense is not different from It. Nothing can give a man greater security, strength and satisfaction than his experience of It. Few adventures are so elevating and satisfying as the one that takes us to this supreme goal.

However, it is reasonable that we should be prepared for the sacrifice it entails and the discipline it demands. It needs a training no less strenuous than what the astronauts undergo before the lift-off to space. It was rightly hailed as a glorious feat when three men for the first time landed on the moon in July last and returned to the earth with a sample of lunar soil—soil that roused human curiosity and served as the object of research study. What does a man of realization bring? When a man succeeds in his spiritual adventure and returns, he is no more his former self, but is transformed to a free being, bringing blessing to the world. Whatever he says or does conduces to the welfare of all. Such being the return, the discipline in this case needs to be practised with one's whole heart. As the spiritual adventure is not limited to a few but intended for the whole humanity, the methods differ according to the varying conditions of aptitude, ability, education and environment. But a common feature is discernible. '"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This sentence alone', said Swami Vivekananda, 'would save mankind, if all books and prophets were lost. This purity of heart will bring the vision of God. It is the theme of the whole music of this universe. In purity is no bondage. Remove veils of ignorance by purity, then we manifest ourselves as we really are and know that we were never in bondage'.[6] Spiritual exercises are designed to help man in the process of purification. In a purified mind is revealed the real nature of man. Diverse as the means are, they lead to the same goal

[3] Māṇḍūkya Kārikā III. 36.
[4] *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* III. 7.
[5] Ibid. III. 8.

[6] Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, Vol. VII, 1958, p. 103.

ultimately—the goal of realization that one is the Eternal Pure Essence of Intelligence or Brahman. This is the End of ends or the Self-knowledge that provides the motive force for dynamic adventures on the spiritual plane.

IV

A question or two might arise in this connection. What will happen to the knowledge of various arts and sciences on the dawn of Self-knowledge? They will present themselves in their true perspective, that is, as relative knowledge arising from subject-object relationship and cease to cast a spell on one as Absolute or Fundamental knowledge. Even science and philosophy which claim our special attention today will be viewed as being conditioned by man's intellectual apprehension. On the dawn of Self-knowledge, one shoots oneself off beyond the intellectual range, reaches the very Self of man and the universe, and gains the direct knowledge that everything of this world, including the relative knowledge, is grounded in Brahman. It is then seen that Brahman is the Knowledge of our knowledge, the Rationale of all truths, the Truth of all relative truths. Understandably, our true welfare lies in orienting all our knowledge, aspirations and activities to Self-knowledge. This is why the great Teachers of the world set themselves to the task of rousing our spiritual consciousness.

Another question—a relevant one—is likely to assail us: Can a man of the world taking to the spiritual path attend to his duties and responsibilities? To a similar question Sri Ramakrishna gave the following answer: 'Yes, you can perform them (worldly duties—duties associated with earning money and so on) too, but only as much as you need for your livelihood. At the same time, you must pray to God in solitude, with tears in your eyes that you may be able to perform your duties in an unselfish manner.'[7] On another occasion he said to a householder, 'He who has realized God knows that God has become the world and all living beings. When you feed your child, you should feel that you are feeding God. You should look on your father and mother as veritable manifestation of God and the Divine Mother, and serve them as such. If a man enters the world after realizing God he does not generally keep up physical relation with his wife. Both of them are devotees; they love to talk only of God and pass their time in spiritual conversation. They serve other devotees of God, for they know that God alone has become all living beings; and knowing this, they devote their lives to the service of others.'[8]

It is thus obvious that worldly duty is no hindrance but a help in the spiritual path provided it is done in an unselfish manner, without attachment to the fruits thereof. Desire for the results of work has of course to be renounced. Otherwise work drowns a man in the ocean of *saṁsāra* and there is no escape from bondage to the interminable results of action. The *Gītā* emphasizes this point because such are the intricacies of work that even great men are sometimes caught in it and become attached. But through sincere practice one's power of detachment develops. It is a salutary guidance to a spiritual adventurer that he should deify the world and all living beings and serve others in the spirit of worship of God. Whatever be the means one adopts, the ultimate goal is Self-knowledge or the knowledge of Brahman.

Spiritual adventure extends its call to one and all to dare and dive into the depth

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7 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1944, p. 66.

8 Ibid. p. 251.

of the Self of man and the universe. What is needed is manly endeavour. Beasts and birds seek creature comforts. But it is the prerogative of man to launch upon the spiritual voyage and reach the supreme goal of Self-knowledge.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

The Lord My Refuge

Sri Ramakrishna Sevashrama
Kankhal
23rd May, 1913

Dear Sri —,

I am glad to receive your kind letter dated the 17th instant. After coming to Kankhal I am feeling slightly better than I have been while at Kasi. But I do not think there has been any abatement of the disease itself. ... Every day I am growing weaker, but even now I am trudging on.

Whatever is to happen to us has happened—now it is our great desire to see that you all arise and by the grace of the Mother become blessed by doing Her work. Let Swamiji's words: 'For the liberation of the Self and the good of the world', be fulfilled.

I am pleased to learn that your mind is now in a good state and firmly resolved. That is what's wanted. What is greater than giving life in a noble cause? When death is certain, it is better to sacrifice life for a noble cause.[1] Will such words stay as mere words in a book? Are not such words to be translated in life?

You have done well!

After having heard and known everything, if you had not acted as you did, all knowledge would have been reduced to just ignorance. Be firm, never allowing weakness to come anywhere near you. By the grace of the Lord and by holding before you the examples of the Master himself and of Swamiji (Vivekananda), go ahead fearlessly, without any worry whatsoever. ... Mother herself will protect you. If you reflect a little you will understand that she has been protecting you at all time. Had She not held you fast and help you up, could you have stayed protected so long? By no means. Don't you see how Mother Herself has cleared the way and drawn you now towards Herself—so why should you have any fear? Now go to the Mother and get

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1 Reference here is to the following verse from the *Hitopadeśa* (Chapter III):

धनानि जीवितञ्चैव परार्थे प्राज्ञ उत्सृजेत् ।
सन्निमित्ते वरं त्यागो विनाशे नियते सति ।

'A wise person should sacrifice his wealth and life for others. When death is certain it is better to sacrifice life for a noble cause.'

your relationship to Her firmly established. Once for all get confirmed in the severance of all other attachments; then Mother Herself will graciously show you that there is nothing whatsoever but She. The same Rāma sports in every being. Mother Herself pervades everything. Mother will reveal to you that Brahmamayī is in everything that at Her feet are verily Ganga, Gaya and Kasi. With this realization you will have attained supreme self-fulfilment. The sense of distinction between one's own people and the alien is then lost and one feels all as pervaded by the Mother.

But for the present, as you have said, you should consider the Lord's people who will take you towards Him as your own and delight in their company. And you will stay away from those who will take you away from the Lord. Now all relationship is through the Mother—there is no other relationship. You must now have this firm conviction in whichever way possible: 'At heart I have known this essence—I am Mother's, Mother is mine.' If, to do this, you have to pluck out your heart with your own hand, even that must be accepted—that is all. You are an intelligent person, what more need I tell you? Mother Herself will communicate everything to you.

When Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) comes to Puri, go there and stay with him; that will do you great good. I have hardly to tell you that his rare company is spiritually fruitful.

May the Lord fulfil the cherished desire of your heart: this is my sincere supplication to the Lord. What more to write? The ultimate and supreme gain is in being wholly absorbed in that mental disposition in which one considers oneself the child of the Lord, the servant of the Lord.

I am pleased to learn that Te— has been doing good work externally too. We are also very pleased with the work of Tu— Maharaj. The Lord Himself accomplishes His own work, others associated being mere pretexts. Blessed indeed are they who can go on doing His work rightly as instruments in His hands. Please convey our love to Ra— . Please convey our love and best wishes to Ru— , and Su— .

With my best wishes and love,

Your well-wisher.
Sri Turiyananda

P.S. Swami Shivananda and others are keeping well. Good news in all other regards. Master Mahashaya ('M') is here; he is keeping well and is earnestly engaged in *tapasya* (practice of spiritual disciplines). He thanks you for your enquiries.
—Tu

THE GOSPEL OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

SWAMI ATULANANDA

There is a popular saying that prophets are not honoured in their own time and in their own land. Like most popular sayings, this one is also only partly true. But that great men often have passed through life unrecognized we have abundant proof of. Perhaps this has been so more often in the past than in our own time.

Geniuses have lived and died in abject poverty and neglect. They have often been persecuted, while their teachings or productions in after-years are recognized and appreciated with an enthusiasm as great as was the contempt with which they were treated during their lifetime. Jesus was nailed to the cross, Socrates was made to drink the cup of deadly hemlock, Loyola was burned alive at the stake.

In this respect the West has sinned more often than the East. In India at least it is not difficult to cite examples in plenty where prophets have been honoured in their own land and in their own time. Śrī Rāmacandra, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Buddha Deva, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, Śrī Caitanya, Sri Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda are instances at hand. And when I cite these examples, I do not mean to infer that these messengers of light were universally accepted during their lifetime, but that at least they had a large following even while still on earth.

If it is true that like alone can know like, in other words, that genius alone can recognize genius, then it follows that the higher the genius towers above the run of humanity or above his immediate surroundings, the fewer will be his adherents.

And here we meet with a curious fact. If we look back through the ages and at our present time, what do we find? The records of history show that where the West has produced a splendid array of recognized geniuses in worldly pursuits, India presents a galaxy of stars in the spiritual firmament unequalled in other lands. Where the West recognizes greatness expressing itself in terms of materialism, the East bows down to and worships spiritual attainment. Spiritual giants are born in the East not by accident, but because in the East alone are they recognized. In the East alone can their advent serve the purpose for which they incarnate. In India they enter upon fertile and cultivated soil ready to receive them.

The West opens wide her arms to inventors, scientists, organizers, kings of trade and commerce. The East welcomes saints and seers—*avatāras* with a message from God.

Not long ago I met with a Christian missionary who presented to me a curious argument. 'Kṛṣṇa', he said, 'makes the statement in the *Gītā* that God comes to earth again and again whenever religion declines, to re-establish righteousness. Now as God is supposed to have incarnated in different times in the East alone, and especially in India, it follows that in India there has always been the greatest need for Him, that in India there has been through all ages more unrighteousness than anywhere else in the world.'

My Christian friend, however, overlooked one fact, namely that the Incarnation does not come to benefit only one particular geographical spot, but comes for the good of the world. The fact that God incarnates in India only goes to show that here He finds the most favourable conditions by way of parents, surroundings, associates and social conditions. These not

only make His birth here possible but also His mode of life.

The Incarnation, being born in a land where he could grow into manhood and preach unmolested His message, was not confined to His immediate surroundings. His message travelled far and wide till it reached the corners of the earth. This we see to-day when the messages of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, of Buddha, of Sri Ramakrishna are accepted even in the western hemisphere.

It may sound like a hard indictment, but had Sri Ramakrishna been born in the West, he would have hardly escaped being locked up in some asylum. It is therefore that he took birth in India, the only country to-day that would offer him the opportunity to express himself, to live his life unmolested by the people and authorities of the land. But his birth in India did not prevent his world-message from travelling to countries where perhaps it was most needed.

Let me hasten to say, however, that by making this statement about the West I do not mean to infer that the West is necessarily more wicked than the East. Her virtues in many respects often exceed those of the East. India would do well to emulate these virtues. I mean to infer only that spiritual genius is not recognized there as it is in India.

And why is this so? Because, as we have seen, the ideals of Western nations are different. In the West we want activity, production, improvement, whatever comes under the heading of utility. And utility is used in the material sense. Whatever goes to increase desires and to satisfy these desires is welcomed in the West. The eastern ideal is the reverse. Here we welcome whatever helps to minimize our desires, to simplify life, to give satisfaction independent of material means. In other words, the Indian ideal is renunciation. And he who preaches and practises renunciation is honoured in this land, whereas in the West he is scorned.

For example, if we turn to the *Gītā* and read the characteristic qualifications of a saint as given there by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we must confess that these hardly fit in with the western scheme of life.

How can we recognize a man of realization? Arjuna asks. And the reply is: Such a man casts off all desires from his mind, he is satisfied in himself by himself. As a tortoise draws in his limbs, so the wise man draws his mind away from sense-objects. This is the Indian ideal: the man of renunciation, the man with his mind turned inward, firmly fixed on God.

It is about such a man, Paramahamsa Sri Ramakrishna, and about his gospel, that I wish to speak to you to-day. The saviours of mankind, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, come to regenerate the world like the spring which brings forth new fruits and flowers. They come to help those who strive for liberation. They come to steer man across the ocean of this world; to take him to the heaven of peace and blessedness. And this they do from a pure, unselfish motive.

The great Master Sri Ramakrishna was such a saviour. At the time of his advent about the middle of the last century (he was born on February 18th, 1836) the eyes of the people in the land of his birth were dazzled by the sight of western civilization. And Hindus, forgetting their own greatness as a spiritual nation, were blinded by the material propensity of other lands. Gradually their attention began to be directed towards physical well-being at the expense of higher ideals. They began to lose sight of the fact that, after all, human civilization to be lasting must rest upon a spiritual basis. For then alone can civilization lead humanity back to the great Reality towards which we must all

proceed. Without this, life can have but little meaning or value.

Civilization when built on materialistic ideals will always remain a chaos. For unless the mind of a nation is strengthened and steadied by spiritual ideals, that mind will be subject to passions and selfish ambitions which in the end will work its ruin.

So once more Śrī Kṛṣṇa's promise that he would come to earth again and again to teach humanity, found fulfilment in the birth of Sri Ramakrishna. For he was, as it were, the embodiment of truth and righteousness, and his whole life was an interpretation of the spiritual teachings of the Hindu sages, the teachings which for ages have formed the basis of Hindu culture and civilization.

It was, then, at the time when India was in danger of following in the footsteps of the West, when she was in danger of changing her spiritual ideals for materialistic ideals and ambitions, that Sri Ramakrishna appeared. He led India back to her spiritual aspirations. And thus he not only saved India from destruction, but through her he also taught all the world the path of truth and righteousness, the path that leads to the highest goal.

The West has always received her spiritual inspirations from the East. And the greatest among the western philosophers have been frank enough to admit this. Wonderful indeed are the philosophies of the West. Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Bergson and others have risen to dazzling heights of intellect. But none of the systems propounded by these great thinkers has attained to the completeness and perfection of Vedanta. And few, if any, of the Western sages and mystics have attained to the realization of absolute Existence where all duality is swallowed up in that supreme attainment, the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, where knowledge, knower and known melt into the ocean of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. That supreme realization belongs pre-eminently to the East. It is through the Indian *ṛṣis* that the highest Truth has come to humanity.

It was witnessed again in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Here was a god-man who came face to face with the deepest and sublimest mysteries of existence.

Losing all consciousness of the external world, he would be absorbed in absolute Being, the source of all existence and manifestation. Returning from this sublime experience, he would teach his beloved disciples the Truth which to him was tangible as the things of the world are tangible to us. And when his mission was fulfilled, and when by his life he had tested and demonstrated the eternal truths of Vedanta, he departed from this world on August 16, 1886. But he left behind a group of young disciples to spread far and wide the universal gospel of love and wisdom, of which he himself had been the embodiment.

And so it happened that once again the ancient teachings of the Vedas were vindicated, and that these truths were carried to Europe and America, where they were received as a new message of hope and enlightenment.

Truth is eternal, and no saviour claims to have brought a new message. But that eternal Truth at times is greatly neglected and in danger of being forgotten. It is at such times that God incarnates as man to restate, to revive, to popularize that divine wisdom.

Now, let us see what was the special message, the gospel, that Sri Ramakrishna brought to the world. It is not easy to summarize this in a few words. But we may quote the words of Swami Vivekananda, the greatest of his disciples, to get an idea of the sublimity, the practicality, and the far-reaching effect of that message.

Sri Ramakrishna taught that the soul of man is potentially divine; and that it is the aim of life to realize and manifest the divinity that dwells within us. This may be done either by work consecrated to God, or by worship, or by psychic control of nature, or by practical philosophy.

By these means, Swami Vivekananda said, we must surmount nature and become free. This is the whole secret of religion. Doctrines, dogmas, rituals, books, temples and forms are secondary details.

This is the essence, the kernel of religion; and from this statement flows the other message which sounds so simple but of which the world stood so much in need, namely, that all religions are but different paths leading to the same goal.

This is a simple but at the same time a very bold assertion. And the truth of these words will be understood only by those who are free from prejudice and superstition; by those sincere seekers after ultimate Truth who dare to break through dogma and form, who, putting aside theology and church-bondage, go to the source of all wisdom, to the eternal Light shining within the heart of man.

Every sect holds that the religion it believes in is the only true religion, and that all other religions are false and so many delusions of the mind. Every sect wants to prove that the doctrines held by it are true and that all other sects live in error. They are not willing to accept that other religions as well as their own may lead man to salvation. It is so with the Christians, with the Buddhists, with the Mohammedans, with the different sects in all great religions.

But Sri Ramakrishna knew better because his own experience had taught him that all religions lead to God. We do not investigate sincerely, and therefore we remain in ignorance. When we study other religions, we do so with a prejudiced mind, and in a superficial way. And often the motive of our investigation is not to arrive at the truth of the matter, but to find flaws in other religions, so that with more strength and security we may preach our own.

If we want to test the truth of Sri Ramakrishna's assertion, we shall have to follow a different method. We shall have to do as he did; we shall have to enter deep into the religious consciousness. We shall have to practise what the different religions preach. Then alone shall we find that the difference is only on the surface. The theology, the doctrine, differs, but the practical method is the same in all religions.

But how could Sri Ramakrishna know this? He was not a man of learning; he made no study of comparative religion. No, he was not learned in the ordinary sense, but he was most practical. He put everything to the test. And only after having experienced truth for himself did he accept it and teach it to others. By this practical method, he became the possessor of all wisdom. His wisdom was based on experience; it was direct perception.

So after having realized God in his own religion, he tested other religions. And he found that they all lead to God.

When practising Christ's teachings, Jesus in a luminous body appeared before him and his own consciousness mingled with the consciousness of Christ. Then he realized that Christ and he were one. So, he practised other teachings of other god-men. And in all these ways, God revealed Himself to him.

Thus Sri Ramakrishna realized the truth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's saying in the *Gītā* that whoever seeks to realize Him, the Lord, in whatever manner, will realize Him. Thus Sri Ramakrishna also realized the teachings of the different saviours. He realized the

inner meaning and unity of the great creeds of the world. Therefore what he taught he taught with authority.

And all through his life, he showed a deep and genuine sympathy for all religions. Never did he condemn, never did he speak a word against any creed. He accepted all, and he helped everyone in the path he had chosen. He never said : You are wrong, you are deluded. No. He said : My child, go on in your own religion. Only do not stop, enter deeper into the truth you are struggling to realize. Dive deep, dive deep, into the ocean of bliss. He always pointed out the way best suited to each individual. His advice was that everyone should follow his own religion. It is the easiest method, the most natural way. It matters not what our religion is, so long as we are sincere.

In our own religion, we feel at home ; it comes easy and natural to us. But our love and devotion must be intensified. To say that all religions lead to God, and to practise none will do us no good. Let us say : All religions lead to God, but I shall realize Him in my own. I shall not rest till I have seen God, till I know that God exists. Let the Christian worship Christ, the Buddhist Buddha, each one his own chosen ideal.

But, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, tremendous determination is required and constant application. Then Truth will reveal Itself. There must be an all-consuming desire to know God. Then alone shall we succeed in coming face to face with Him. As the drowning man pants for a breath of air, even so the soul must pant after God. Cry unto the Lord with a yearning heart. Then thou shalt see Him.

People, he said, shed a jugful of tears for their wives and children ; they shed a river of tears for money. But who cries for the Lord ? You will see God, he said, if your love for Him is as strong as the love of the worldly man for the things of this world, or of the mother for her child, or of the chaste wife for her husband. You must love God with heart and soul.

This saying also was the outcome of his own experience. It had become a reality in his own life. For years he prayed and meditated with all the depth and intensity his soul was capable of. His devotion was so intense, so fervent that he would forget everything else when he was in prayer or meditation. Sometimes he would weep for hours because he could not realize God as perfectly as he longed to. He talked with God as a child talks to his mother. For twelve years, his life was one intense struggle and yearning to know God.

About this part of his life, he himself used to say to his disciples that he was not aware when the sun rose or set. Sometimes for weeks he had no other thought but to see his divine Mother, as he called God. Tears would trickle down his cheeks, and only this one prayer came from his lips : Mother, manifest Thyself to me. Thou art the Mother of the universe, see that I may want Thee and Thee alone.

Through severe self-discipline, Sri Ramakrishna crushed within himself all lust of the flesh, all low ambitions, pride and egotism. He renounced all sex idea, he cast aside distinctions of race and colour. He looked upon all men alike as manifestations of God.

It was through struggle that Sri Ramakrishna reached the highest state of consciousness, the supreme vision where all conflict ends and the soul realizes the eternal harmony of things. And having struggled and attained, he became the greatest teacher of the age. He knew that only by having gone the whole length himself can a man show the path to others.

Sri Ramakrishna was a true teacher commissioned by God. Such a teacher, he him-

self used to say, need not seek for an audience or disciples. They come of themselves. When the lamp is lighted the insects appear in numbers. They are sure to rush towards the light. Nobody need invite them.

So it was with this man of illumination; people came to him of their own accord. His magnetic influence none could resist. The sweet influence of his character was diffused everywhere, and all who sought after Truth were naturally drawn towards him. He had a never-failing supply of wisdom, the wisdom of life. He drew from the source of all wisdom, and the supply was never exhausted.

The world saviours, Sri Ramakrishna said, are the greatest of all teachers. As the locomotive engine easily pulls along a train of heavily laden carriages, so the Incarnations, the loving children of God, feel no trouble in passing through all the worries and anxieties of life, and they easily lead man along with them to God. There is a fabled species of birds called the Homa bird. These birds live so high up in the heavens, and they so dearly love those high regions that they never come down to earth. Their eggs, laid in the sky, begin to fall down, and as they are falling they hatch. The young birds, seeing that they are falling to the earth, at once change their course and begin to fly upwards to their home high up in the sky. Divine men, such as Jesus, Buddha, and others, are like these birds. Even in their boyhood, they give up all attachment for this world, and betake themselves to the highest regions of true knowledge and bliss.

The swan, it is said, can separate milk from water. She drinks only the milk leaving the water untouched. Other birds cannot do so. God is intimately mixed with the world of Māyā. Ordinary men cannot distinguish God from His Māyā. But the Paramahamsas, the great souls, reject the Māyā even as the swan rejects the water. They drink of the milk of Bliss, which is God.

Sri Ramakrishna taught in very simple language, through stories and parables. But numbers of earnest men of all sects and creeds flocked to him and sat at his feet to listen to his charming words. His wonderful purity, his childlike simplicity, his profound wisdom, his rapturous love for God made a deep impression on all who came in contact with him. The educated, the uneducated, men, women, youths, all came to him for light and guidance.

Day and night, he was surrounded by disciples and visitors. And always he was ready to give freely from his store of wisdom and realization.

There are two kinds of men, he used to say, one class is worldly, the other class spiritually inclined. Men immersed in worldliness cannot attain divine wisdom. They cannot realize God. As muddy water cannot reflect the sun, so the mind that is attached to the world cannot reflect the divine image of God. Such men do not like to hear about spiritual things. They are like the beetle that lives on filth. Such a beetle does not like to enter a fragrant lotus. It prefers filth. Similarly the worldly-minded do not like the company of holy men. They prefer worldly talk and gossip.

Once a fisherwoman on her way home was overtaken by a storm. As it was evening, she took shelter in the house of a florist; the florist received her very kindly and gave her a room full of flowers. But though everything was so comfortable the woman could not sleep. At last, she discovered that the sweet aroma of the flowers was keeping her awake. So she took her empty fish basket, placed it near her head, and there was sound sleep. Thus it is with

worldly men. They cannot relish the fragrance of a spiritual atmosphere. Now, the spiritually inclined are just the reverse. They like to hear about God. They are happy in the company of devotees, and to hear religious discourses. They perform religious practices and try to know the Truth.

It is for such pure souls that God incarnates in human form. They listen eagerly to good teachings. And applying these teachings in their daily lives, they soon gain in spiritual knowledge. And thus they find perfect peace of mind.

Now there are four kinds of perfect men, Sri Ramakrishna used to say. First, the class just mentioned, those who learn from the teachers. They watch the teacher's life, they follow his example and obey his words. They serve and love him, and finally they realize their own divine nature.

The second class are those who become perfect through dream inspiration. In dream, they see some great soul who gives them instructions. And when they wake up, they remember this and, following the instruction, they become perfect.

The third class are those who become perfect through the mercy of a great soul. They may have been worldly-minded before, but meeting a great teacher they are suddenly changed, and live a holy life ever after. There was just a little worldliness left in them clouding their minds. But through the grace of the teacher, that thin veil of ignorance is suddenly rent, and the full light of wisdom illumines their minds.

And then there is the fourth class, those who are ever perfect. They are born free. They have reached perfection in a previous cycle of existence. And all their apparent efforts to attain liberation in this life are only to set an example to mankind. They are born with wisdom, and from childhood they do what is right. Instinctively they omit evil. From the beginning, their perfect nature is manifest.

Some of these free souls incarnate when the Lord appears on earth. They are, as it were, His companions. And they always remain with God. They are the disciples of the great saviours of the world. They come to earth to help in the work, and spread the Master's message.

But greater and beyond all these is the Incarnation Himself, for He is always conscious of His perfect and infinite nature.

The Lord incarnates on earth with his disciples. And when he departs, his disciples follow Him when their work is done, and then they enter a state of everlasting Bliss. These disciples are like His satellites. They always are near the Lord—serving and loving Him with all their heart and soul.

Once a devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna, What are Incarnations? He replied : Just as water is formless but when frozen takes different forms, so God also takes different forms to save mankind from the bondage of ignorance. As the wave appears on the ocean, so the saviours appear on the ocean of Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.

Now, let us see what Sri Ramakrishna taught that may be of direct help to us in our spiritual life. How shall we conduct ourselves so that we may gain that divine wisdom that He Himself possessed in such abundance?

We have seen that Sri Ramakrishna taught that to live a spiritual life, we must have an intense longing to know the Truth. Then we must have faith. He who has faith, the Master said, has everything. He who doubts lives in misery.

But is there hope for one who lives a family life? a disciple asked. Yes, Sri Ramakrishna replied, there is a remedy for all. The family man should seek the company of holy people. He should from

time to time go into retirement away from his family, in order to meditate on God. He should remember that the joys of this world are fleeting, and that the spirit endures for ever. He should pray earnestly, O Mother, grant me love and faith. If one gets faith the work is done. There is nothing higher than faith. Have faith in God, and He will save you. Faith is omnipotent, it works wonders. Before it the powers of nature even give way.

And then he told the story of a devotee who wanted to cross a river but had no boat. He appealed to a friend for help. This friend had a leaf on which was written the name of Rāma. 'Take this leaf', his friend said, 'and hold it firmly in your hand. This will enable you to walk on the water and cross the river in perfect safety. But do not look at the leaf. If you do so you will go down.' The devotee took the leaf and stepped out upon the river. All went well. But when he came to the middle of the stream, curiosity got the better of him. He wanted to know what was the mysterious power in the leaf that kept him from drowning in the water. So he took the leaf, and opened it to see what it contained. Then he found there was nothing inside. On the leaf was simply written the name Rāma. He was disappointed and thought 'Is that all? Why should that have such power?' He began to doubt. And instantly, he drowned beneath the water.

One must be simple like a child, Sri Ramakrishna said, in order to have strong faith in God. The Lord is far away from the duplicity of the world. Worldliness brings doubt and scepticism. Where there is no faith, it is idle to look for divine wisdom. If you believe like a child what the Guru tells you, then you receive the grace of God.

And then he explained how we should live in the world. When a plant is young, he said, it requires a hedge around it to protect it from goats and other animals that might eat it. But when the plant grows into a tree, it requires no protection; nay, it serves as a protection for the same animals that in its early stage would have destroyed it.

So the religious aspirant must hedge himself in from evil influences and temptations. He must guard his mind from wrong thoughts, and he must avoid worldly-minded people. He must always take shelter in God.

But when full illumination has come, then no protection is necessary; nay, then, such a free soul will be a shelter for those who come to him for light and guidance.

Once a disciple asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'How should we live in the world?' He replied: Let part of the mind always rest in God. The tortoise goes about in the water in quest of food. But her mind is always watching the bank of the river where her eggs are laid. In the same way, you may go about doing your work, but take good care that your mind never strays entirely away from God.

But to be able to do this, prayer and meditation are necessary, and solitude now and then. First, cultivate love for God, and then you can live in the world free from danger. Look at everything as belonging to the Lord. You are only His steward. Do your duty as loving service to God.

Sri Ramakrishna's personality, we are told, was most attractive. Wherever he went he carried with him an atmosphere of calm and peace and blessedness. His body was well formed, and his face expressed a childlike tenderness, profound humility, and unspeakable sweetness seen on no other face. His smile was enchanting.

In dress and diet, Sri Ramakrishna was

not different from other men. He disliked all kind of show. And when people praised him or showed him exceptional honour, he felt uneasy. He did not like even to be called a Guru. Any form of lionizing displeased him.

He was content to be the Mother's child, to be close to Her, to do Her bidding. The company of the worldly-minded he shunned. But in the presence of devotees he felt happy. He would talk to them about his own experiences; he would encourage and console them. And as he talked, he would suddenly enter into a state of rapturous ecstasy that made further speech impossible. Then the devotees would sit and wonder, and they would be amazed at the expression of bliss that would suddenly illumine his face.

Sri Ramakrishna's words were so simple; they were always sweet and charming. And with all this simplicity there was a wondrous strength. Every word hit the mark. One was aware of a tremendous power behind the childlike appearance. And his great success as a teacher we find in the fact that he gave every one exactly what he needed. One found his doubts settled, his troubles removed, even before they were expressed.

Sri Ramakrishna's love for his devotees was endless. He would go through any amount of trouble to help even the simplest. His life was given for the salvation of man. He came to show man that even in this life God-vision is possible.

Sri Ramakrishna solved all the problems of life, and it is no wonder that his disciples worshipped him with divine worship. In him they saw a man with whom God-consciousness was a habitual state of mind.

In Sri Ramakrishna, they saw a son of God, the divine Incarnation, the embodiment of God's love for mankind. They realized that his will was the divine will; that his self was merged in God.

And now Sri Ramakrishna is no more with us in the body. But his gospel is with us, and will endure for ever. And his spirit is with us. And every one who worships the sons of God in spirit and in truth, be it as Christ, or Buddha, or Kṛṣṇa, or in whatever divine Incarnation, he worships Sri Ramakrishna who was the embodiment of all, for the spirit is one, manifesting itself in many ways.

But let us listen to the whole splendid harmony of the present, wherein the past dreams and the future aspirations of all races and all ages are blended. For those who have ears to hear every second contains the song of humanity from the first born to the last to die, unfolding like jasmine round the wheel of the ages. There is no need to decipher papyrus in order to trace the road traversed by the thoughts of men. The thoughts of a thousand years are all around us. Nothing is obliterated. Listen! but listen with your ears. Let books be silent! They talk too much ...

—*Romain Rolland*

(The Life of Ramakrishna)

ESSAYS ON APPLIED RELIGION

THREE DISCIPLINES FOR SELF-MASTERY

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

I

Self-mastery in an absolute sense, means the absolute and unqualified control of the indwelling spirit or Ātman over body, mind, senses and circumstances.

What is called self-mastery, practically that is Self-realization. What is called Self-realization, that is experiential identity with the Supreme Spirit. The experienced identity with the Supreme Spirit is another name for attainment of illumination. And attainment of illumination is non-different from what is known as salvation or liberation of the spirit.

That is said to be the highest objective of life. In a relative sense self-mastery means our perfect control over our thoughts, emotions and actions.

In religious talk in India, nothing perhaps comes so smoothly on the lips of a preacher as a facile reference to salvation. But who wants salvation in this exciting, enticing world? Even in his own good old days Śrī Kṛṣṇa could only say:

'Among thousands only a handful strive for attaining perfection.'[1]

It will be too much to expect many people to hanker after salvation. And there is good reason why people do not rush for salvation. Salvation is a very devastating concept and undertaking. It takes away everything from you which you consider 'the good things of life'. Moreover it takes you away and out of the very frame of life, as you know it, and withal out of the bourne of death too.

Now, how many even among those who consider themselves as religious can place their hands over their hearts and say truthfully that they want nothing but salvation?

You never want salvation when you want anything else along with it.

And yet driven by the sorrows, miseries, and tribulations of life, we often mouth a cry for salvation from the bondage of life. But if someone would offer to take away our bondage in response to our cry, we would hug those very bondages to ourselves and tell the person that we never really meant what we said.

There is the story of an old widow who used to live in abject poverty and hardship. She had none to call her own in this world. Somehow she eked out her living by picking up dry wood in the forest and selling it in the village market. As she grew older this became a very painful task for her. One day in the lonely forest, when she was trying to lift a bundle of wood on her head, her head reeled and she fell down on the ground. In that pitiable state, unable any more to bear the pain of living that wretched life, she wailed, 'Oh Lord, why have You kept this old hag alive? You take away so many young people from life to death, why can't You take me and relieve me of this suffering which I cannot any more bear?'

Suddenly, as the story goes, the Lord appeared before her and said He had come in response to her prayer to relieve her of miserable existence. The woman, who was lying on the ground and weeping, sat

[1] *Bhagavad-Gītā* VII. 3.

straight up in surprise and gathering all her wits and wisdom said, 'Oh Lord, I never meant what I said. I called upon You only to help me to lift my bundle of wood on my head, so that I may go to the market in time and sell it!'

The Lord smiled, lifted the bundle on the old woman's head and went away!

II

A handful of yearning souls apart, most of the religious people in the world want religion to help lift their burden so that they may go to the market place for buying and selling.

Indeed, unless and until we have had the fulness of life's experiences, and have for ourselves seen the vacuity of things, no yearning for salvation can even crop up in our heart. It is psychologically impossible.

Therefore, at a certain stage of one's inner evolution it is perfectly legitimate to expect religion to lift one's life's burden and help one to live well.

We read in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, that once, when the sage Yājñavalkya appeared in the royal court, King Janaka asked:

> 'Yājñavalka, what has brought you here? To have some animals or to have some subtle questions answered? Both, O Emperor, said Yājñavalkya.'[2]

This was a very significant answer that Yājñavalkya gave to an interesting question. We require both cattle and philosophy, 'cattle' representing our material needs and philosophy our supra-material needs. We require to live with our body and soul together; so we need both food and philosophy, we require to exist and also to enquire into the ultimate verities. If we have only food and no philosophy, or only philosophy and no food—life could only end in disaster of two varieties.

[2] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* IV. I. 1.

Most of us, however, are not yet in a frame of mind to enquire into ultimate questions. The immediate itself demands our entire attention, either by its charm or by its compelling intricacies. Talk about salvation, therefore, is not at all a vital question with us. As we understand it, we have more urgent business on hand than salvation.

Hence self-mastery, which leads to the attainment of salvation, would not appear to have much meaning for us who perhaps want to live a good life in this world, and enjoy living such a life.

Self-mastery would indeed be important for us if it helped us to live a good life. But can it really help us live a good life?

The answer to this question comes from a very high authority, the Buddha. In the course of a conversation with Simha, the army General-in-Chief, the Buddha said:

> 'The doctrine of conquest of self, O Simha, is not taught to destroy the souls of men, but to preserve them. He who has conquered self is more fit to live, to be successful and gain victories than he who is the slave of the self.'[3]
>
> 'Great is a successful general, O Simha, but he who has conquered self is the greater victor.'[4]

We of course talk of good life. But in what context has good life to be viewed? To the extent we have attained self-mastery to that extent alone our life is good. The rest is all evil. This evil may, however, be rationalized and streamlined. It may be given respectability of various sorts. But ultimately it is self-destructive.

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* says:

> 'He who has no understanding, whose mind is always unrestrained, his senses are out of control as the wicked horses of a charioteer.'[5]

[3 & 4] Paul Carus: *The Gospel of Buddha*, The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, 1915. p. 149.

[5] *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I. iii. 5.

What do the unrestrained wicked horses do to the charioteer? They not only take him out of the track but headlong to destruction. In the next verse the Upaniṣad says:

'He, however, who has understanding, whose mind is always restrained, his senses are under control, as are the good horses of a charioteer.'[6]

What do the good horses of a charioteer do to him? They quicken his progress to his destination. In other words self-mastery leads us to the destination, whereas non-self-mastery leads to destruction.

Who among us wants to be destroyed? Just no one! If we do not want to be destroyed, crippled, crumbled or devastated physically, mentally or spiritually, we must not allow our chariot to be drawn by unrestrained and wicked horses. By wicked horses are, here, meant our unrestrained mind and senses. We must be our internal masters if we do not want to be destroyed by our lower impulses. Our destination may be good life or liberation of the spirit. In either case we cannot succeed without practising self-mastery.

And in passing it may be said that good life cannot stand all the tests of the world and time, unless it is hooked on to the fervent aspiration to attain illumination. Temptations are many in this world. Our own lower nature is powerful. Then we do not know what terrific ordeal may spring from our subconscious and involve us in what degrading difficulties.

Therefore we require immense inner strength to be able to live a purposive good life. From where shall we get this strength which will sustain us always and will carry us through all ordeals of life progressively toward our destination?

[6] Ibid., I. iii. 6.

This inner strength can come only from the Lord, who is seated in our heart.

Tiruvalluvar, an ancient law-giver of India, says:

'Hold just to the Lord. Keep that supreme attachment intact, so that you may be released from other attachments that bind the soul.'[7]

Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, writes in a letter to an aspirant:

'Do not consider yourself weak. You may be weak, but the One you have taken refuge in is all-powerful. Therefore, deem yourself strong in His strength. When this conviction dawns on a person that God is the only refuge, he feels an influx of supreme strength in his heart.'[8]

If we do not love God with all our heart and soul, we cannot help our hearts suffering agonies of all sorts.

In any case, therefore, whether we are good-life-minded or salvation-minded, self-mastery becomes the most fundamental requirement of any intelligent human being, at any point of time anywhere in the world.

III

Now the question is: how do we attain this self-mastery?

The answer is: through the practice of certain disciplines or austerities. The Sanskrit word for austerity is *tapas,* which means penance, or propulsion of the inner spirit for attaining an objective.

The *Ṛg-Veda* says:

'By the great power of *tapas* arose the One.'[9]

After arising, the Supreme Being brought about this creation through *tapas.* So says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*:

[7] Vide: *Kural,* The Great Book of Tiru Valluvar, Tr. by C. Rajagopalachari, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1968. 1.35.10 (p. 57).

[8] Vide: *Prabuddha Bharata,* vol. 73, September, 1968.

[9] *Ṛg-Veda* X. 129. 3,

'The Supreme Soul desired: "May I be many, may I be born. He performed austerities. Having performed austerities, He created all this—whatever there is."'[10]

In the Upaniṣads and other Hindu scriptures it is emphasized that practice of *tapas* is needed to attain the Supreme. It is so to say a return journey by the same route. If the Supreme Being brought about the creation through *tapas*, the created, to reach the Supreme, must practise *tapas*.

If we seek to realize the omnipotent Lord in our hearts we shall have to employ all our powers to that end alone. That is the meaning of practising austerities. It is also implied in the Hindu scriptures that, not to speak of attaining illumination, one cannot even live a good, clean and sane life in this world of many attractions and distractions without practising suitable austerities.

No saint in any religion ever reached his spiritual heights without practising auterities. If we read the accounts of the austerities of ancient Hindu sages, the Buddha, the early Christian Fathers and in modern times of Sri Ramakrishna, those will stagger our imagination. On knowing all this, out of sheer despair we would say: if that type of austerity be the condition precedent for attaining good life or spiritual illumination, neither is certainly for us.

Especially in the affluent societies of today where sensate values and soft luxurious living hold their sway, or for the matter of that even in non-affluent societies where the grip of hedonism and materialism is getting firmer every day, there is no idea so much hated as that of austerity.

In this situation what is most important is to clearly see the point that there are austerities and austerities. There are austerities which are wrong and unhelpful. There are austerities which unduly and unnecessarily inflict pain on the body, and are practised either for ostentation or for some evil purposes which are wrong and unhelpful.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa roundly condemns such austerities in the *Gītā* and says:

'Those men who practise severe austerities not enjoined by the *śāstras,* who are given to ostentation and egoism, who are possessed of the power of lust and attachment, who, senseless as they are, torture all the organs of the body, and Me dwelling in the body within—know them to be of demoniac resolve.'[11]

There is, however, nothing frightening about the right type of austerities, which consist of truthful balanced living. The general idea of balanced living Śrī Kṛṣṇa puts across in these clear comforting terms in the *Gītā*:

'Yoga is not for him who eats too much or too little—nor, O Arjuna, for him who sleeps too much or too little.

'To him who is temperate in eating and recreation, in his effort for work, and in sleep and wakefulness, Yoga becomes the destroyer of misery.'[12]

This balanced way of living sets the tone of good life, leading to the attainment of salvation, for both of which one is required to attain self-mastery.

But then Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphatically advocates the practice by every seeker of three definite austerities for attaining self-mastery. These austerities do not involve any self-torture. They only demand self-education and can be practised with great benefit by everyone anywhere in the world under all circumstances.

What are these three austerities?

1. The first is called the austerity of the body.

2. The second is called the austerity of the speech.

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[10] *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: II. vi. 1.

[11] *Bhagavad-Gītā* XVII. 5-6.

[12] Ibid. VI. 16-17.

3. The third is called the austerity of the mind.

Tapas or austerity is the self-discipline prescribed by religion in order to bring the body and mind under control. Hence any prescribed austerity when practised correctly affects beneficially our entire psychophysical system.

Yet Śrī Kṛṣṇa makes a threefold division of austerity in order to indicate the primary objective of each austerity. All-important as these threefold austerities are for attaining self-mastery, we should try to understand them as clearly as possible. And then if we intelligently and steadfastly practise them in our daily life, eventually, depending on the efforts we put forth, we shall attain self-mastery.

Now what is the austerity of the body? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*:

> 'Worship of gods, of the twice-born, of the teachers and the wise; cleanliness, uprightness, continence and non-violence—these are said to be austerity of the body.'[13]

Worship of the *devas,* or gods, the twice-born, of teachers and the wise: the word *devas* in Sanskrit means 'the shining ones' or gods, who control the cosmic forces. In this relative world gods and men are interdependent. They are nourished by each other. Men offer worship to gods and thus nourish them. In return the gods assure human welfare. Hence the Lord says in the *Gītā* that those who enjoy things without offering worship are verily thieves.

The twice-born, the teachers and the wise are the spiritually regenerate souls.

What is worship? It has been beautifully said that worship is the response of the creature to the Creator, of the limited to the Unlimited, of the conditioned to the Unconditioned. As such, worship has many levels of expression. But unfortunately, the creature being an embodiment, worship demands discipline of the body.

In Hindu ritualistic worship there are quite a few items like postures and *mudras,* which may be called physical adoration of the deity. In fact, in Bhārata Nātya or Indian system of dancing, the key-idea is adoration of the Lord. Without holding the body in order, you cannot perform worship. In meditation the mind is the chief instrument of inner action, but in ritualistic worship regulated physical movements are of primary importance. Hence worship is called the austerity of the body.

Now, how do we worship the spiritually regenerate people? By rendering them personal service. This indeed is a very difficult type of physical austerity. In the Upaniṣads we read how hard used to be the life of the student. He had to tend cows, draw water, fetch firewood from the forest and do all types of household work. Then he had to attend to studies. And rendering personal service to the teacher was one of the most important items of his education.

Unfortunately, however, rendering personal service to the teacher is going out of practice so to say, even in India. This is a stupendous national loss. Rendering personal service to a worthy person is highly beneficial to the person who renders such service. Such service, in the first place, attenuates our ego; in the second place, it awakens our spiritual consciousness.

In rendering personal service in an ideal manner one has to forget completely one's personal needs and comforts, and devote his energies to the comfort of the other. Through *guru-sevā*, service to the Guru, in this spirit, one can even attain illumination. One of Sri Ramakrishna's disciples,

[13] Ibid., XVII. 4.

Swami Ramakrishnananda, attained illumination in this way.

In the Hindu Dharma Śāstras, or religio-ethical codes, there are detailed injunctions in regard to the manner of extending worshipful service to elders and wise people. In all these, physical restraint is involved.

Cleanliness, uprightness, continence and non-violence are also said to be the austerity of the body.

Housewives perhaps know better than their husbands why Śrī Kṛṣṇa called cleanliness an austerity of the body. It takes a lot of devoted physical exertion and sacrifice of physical comfort, to keep houses pleasant and clean. In many places in India, before dawn women do the sweeping and put auspicious *ālimpana* in front of the house. If you look at their utensils you will know how much labour has gone in for keeping them so clean.

Americans have a passion for cleanliness. They instinctively react against dirt and filth. American housewives, the majority of whom have no servants, work very hard to keep their homes spick and span. In this, Indian women have much to learn from them. If many of Indian homes are just dirty it is because this austerity of cleanliness is not being practised. Healthy living makes for mental clarity also. Mental clarity is one of the causes of prosperity.

Both 'uprightness' and 'non-violence' depend largely on our mental attitude. Why, then, are they included in physical austerity? In all probability because, both uprightness and non-violence demand control of the body and the nervous system.

Continence, physiologically speaking, is conservation of physical energy. Hence it is called physical austerity. It is the foundation of spiritual life. It is obvious that to the extent a person is incontinent, to that extent he is not master of himself. To the degree one is continent, to that degree will one grow in spiritual strength and self-mastery. Only the perfectly continent person can attain perfection in self-mastery.

About the place of continence in married life and its efficacy, interested persons may read Gandhiji's writings for enlightenment and guidance.

Philosophically speaking, incontinence means submission of the spirit to the power of matter within oneself. The outside agency is only a pretext. Until through the assertion of the power of the spirit, the power of matter can be defeated within oneself, one cannot attain full self-mastery. When the conserved physical energy is transmuted through the practice of spiritual disciplines, it becomes what is called *ojas*. In Sanskrit *ojas* denotes spiritual energy. It is through *ojas* that the spiritual work of uplifting oneself and others is done.

There is a widely-held view that observance of continence leads to the development of internal disorders called neuroses. Those who hold this view usually draw their inspiration from western authorities on human psychology. Is this a correct view to hold?

This theory is both true and false. It is true in regard to those who have cherished and developed desires for sensual enjoyments. It is accepted in all civilized society to be a natural desire. In the Indian view of life, *kāma* is considered a *puruṣārtha*, a value of life, but a lower *puruṣārtha*, to be regulated and directed by the higher *puruṣārthas* or *dharma* and *mokṣa*. The institution of sacramental marriage approves of this desire, sanctions and sanctifies it, and seeks to regulate it on healthy lines. Every religion enjoins that rectitude is good even for married people, nay bind-

ing, if they want to be parents of worthy children.

Then, for those whose abstinence is genuine, that is to say, who have cherished no desires for sensual enjoyment, continence is not only not harmful but highly beneficial. The proof of this fact will be found in the lives of the saints of the world.

In studying human psychology, we must never forget the fact that all men do not start their human life on earth from the same point of inner development. When a person develops higher consciousness through abstinence, he no longer remains bound by the same type of vital needs as an ordinary human being does.

And then there are levels of human life. You are both ordinary mortal and extraordinary immortal, if you so choose to be. Ātman is the essential nature of everyone of us. To the extent we succeed in asserting the *ātma-śakti,* the power of the spirit, to that extent we rise above the crippling clutches of natural physical cravings. It is a hard struggle no doubt, but it is a most rewarding undertaking, withal a challenging one.

Self-mastery ultimately means singleness, completeness in oneself, perfect independence, which is impossible as long as one requires another in order to be happy. That is bondage, subservience, in the ultimate analysis.

As the great sage Yājñavalkya teaches in the famous passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV. v. 6) all apparent sources of pleasure, joy and bliss, have their ultimate source in the Ātman. So when we know the Ātman experientially, then we do not any more require the other to be happy. Even the very concept of happiness changes; what in the unregenerate state we thought pleasurable, in the regenerate state becomes loathsome—because we no longer think in terms of matter. But every soul has to pass through stages to attain the supreme state of self-mastery. And one has to set one's own pace in this higher movement.

Students of human psychology will do well to remember that just as suppression of the sex instinct may lead to neurosis, so can the suppression of the religious instinct, and that libertinism is no answer even to the neurosis developed due to the first cause.

Some western psychologists have recognized the value of religion in human life. Dr. Jung, referring to his teacher Dr. Freud who was sceptical about the value of religion, says:

'Freud has unfortunately overlooked the fact that man has never yet been able single-handed to hold his own against the power of darkness. ... Man has always stood in need of the spiritual help which each individual's own religion held out to him. It is this that lifts him out of his darkness.'[14]

Further he says:

'Among all my patients in the second half of life, that is to say, over thirty-five, there has not been one whose problem, in the last resort, was not that of finding religious outlook in life.'[15]

Warning against sensual libertinism an eminent psychologist, Dr. J. A. Hadfield, declares in his book *Psychology and Morals*:

'From the point of view of cure, the advice to "go and express your instinct" is only one degree more foolish than the antiquated advice that used to be given to every neurotic girl, "All you need is to get married." In actual experience I have never known a true neurosis cured

[14] C. G. Jung: *Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1953, p. 119.

[15] Ibid. p. 264.

by marriage, still less by sexual libertinism. But I have personally known many a neurosis precipitated by marriage; indeed, I am sometimes inclined to think that half of my patients are neurotic because they are not married, and the other half because they are.'[16]

IV

Next we come to the austerity of speech which is thus defined by Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

'Words that do not give offence, and that are truthful, pleasant and beneficial, and also the regular recitation of the scriptures—these are said to be the austerity of speech.'[17]

In the *Dhammapada* occurs this precept of the Buddha:

'Do not speak anything harsh. Those who are spoken to, will answer you (in the same way), since angry talk is painful, retaliation will touch you.'[18]

To be able to use only such words as do not give offence, a man requires considerable mastery over his thoughts and emotions. Deliberate use of inoffensive words, therefore, helps one to grow in self-mastery, provided such words are also truthful and beneficial.

Sometimes, in our common dealings, we are inclined to sacrifice truth in order to stay inoffensive, and also inclined to tell what in western society are called 'white lies'. In order to be pleasant also, people often tell lies. People say, 'Well, I did not mean it, I just wanted to be polite.' This, however, is destructive of self-mastery. On the basis of untruth nothing spiritual can be built up. When knowingly or unknowingly we take our stand on falsehood we can never master that will-power which is necessary for attaining self-mastery. If we give up truth, for whatever reason, we renounce that powerful basic factor of life which could make us victorious over all contrary forces.

The Upaniṣad declares:

'Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood.'[19]

The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* says:

'There is no dharma higher than Truth, there is no sin greater than falsehood; therefore should man seek protection under Truth with all his soul. Worship without Truth is useless, and so too without Truth is *Japa* of *Mantras* and the performance of *Tapas*. It is in such cases just as if one sowed seed in salt earth.'[20]

'Thou shalt know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free' said Christ.'[21]

Sri Ramakrishna said:

'Truthfulness is the *tapasyā* (austerity) of the *Kali yuga*.'[22]

One who holds on to truth will one day surely realize God, who is *satya-svarūpa*, the essence of truth.

Sometimes we appear to think that if we are going to speak the truth, we have a right to be harsh and rude. Self-opinionated truth-speakers sometimes become highly offensive self-righteous people who think they are being truthful. But when we are rude, harsh and offensive, though truthful, we are not working for the attain-

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16 J. A. Hadfeld: *Psychology and Morals—An Analysis of Character*, Methuen, London, 1949, p. 116.

17 *Gītā* XVII. 15.

18 *Dhammapada* (Radhakrishnan): Oxford University Press, 1966, Chapter 'Danda-vagga' (Punishment), Verses 5-6.

19 *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 3. i. 6.

20 *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* 4. 75. 76.

21 St John. 8. 32.

22 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1964, p. 726.

ment of self-mastery, for what we shall surely receive back, when we speak the truth that way, will not be very helpful for maintaining our mental poise. Without mental poise, how can we attain self-mastery?

Now the important question arises: 'Is it really possible to combine inoffensiveness, truthfulness, pleasantness and beneficialness in speech?'

The following incident from the life of Buddha will give the answer:

Bharadvāja, a wealthy Brāhmaṇa, was celebrating his harvest festival when the Buddha came with his bowl in hand for begging alms. Some people who were assembled there paid him homage, but the Brāhmaṇa was angry and shouted at him insulting words. He said: 'O Śramaṇa, it would suit you better to go to work than to go begging. I plough and sow, and, having ploughed and sown, I eat. If you do likewise, you too would have something to eat.'

With his profound serenity not in the least disturbed, the Buddha said:

'O Brāhmaṇa, I too plough and sow, and, having ploughed and sown, I eat.' 'Do you profess then to be a farmer?' asked the Brāhmaṇa. 'Where then are your bullocks? Where are the seeds and ploughs?'

The Blessed One replied:

'Faith is the seed I sow; good works are the rains that fertilize it; wisdom and modesty are the plough; my mind is the guiding rein: I lay hold of the handle of the law; earnestness is the goad I use: and exertions are the bullocks.'

Then the Brāhmaṇa poured rice-milk into a golden bowl and offered it to Buddha saying:

'Let the teacher of mankind partake of the rice-milk, for the venerable Buddha ploughs a ploughing that bears the fruit of immortality.'[23]

Is it not clear from this incident of Buddha's life that inoffensiveness, truthfulness, pleasantness and beneficialness can be combined in speech? Unless all these qualities are combined it will not be austerity of speech.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says in his commentary on verse 15, chapter XVII, of the *Gītā*, concerning austerity of speech, that if any of the four qualities are missing then it is not austerity of speech. He says:

'An invariable combination of these attributes—inoffensive, truthful, pleasant and beneficial—is here meant. The speech addressed to others, which, though causing no pain, is devoid of one, two or three of the other attributes—i.e. is not true, is not beneficial, and is not pleasant—cannot form the austerity of speech. So that speech which, though true, is wanting in one, two or three of the other attributes cannot be austerity of speech. So also, that speech which though beneficial, is wanting in one, two or three of the other attributes cannot form the austerity of speech.'

What then forms the austerity of speech? The speech that is true, that causes no excitement, that is agreeable and good, forms the austerity of speech. And the Ācārya gives this example: 'Be tranquil, my son, study the Vedas, practise Yoga, and this will do you good.' In this injunction of the scriptures all the conditions of austerity of speech are fulfilled.

Another austerity of speech is said to be the recitation of the scriptures. The scriptures being the records of revealed truths to sages, or the words of God incarnate on earth, or *mantras* revealed through spiritual intuition, embody a purifying and transforming quality. Whoever recites, expounds or studies the scriptures, or listens to the recitation or exposition of scriptures, gradually acquires for himself the guidance

[23] *Vide*: Paul Carus, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-5.

and inspiration of the noblest thoughts available to men. And these high-power thoughts imperceptibly transform his organ of speech, the content of his speech, and the meaning of what he says. Hence it is called austerity of speech.

V

The third austerity, the austerity of the mind, is enunciated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in these words:

'Serenity of mind, kindliness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive—this is called the mental austerity.'[24]

Those who practise austerity of the body, will find it easier than those who do not, to practise the austerity of speech. Those who practise both austerity of body and that of speech will find it easy to practise austerity of the mind, but not others.

Serenity of mind comes from renunciation of inordinate desires and other wrong movements of the mind, like hatred, avarice, jealousy, and lust. It presupposes effective practice of right discrimination. It can be attained only through continued steady practice. When one is convinced, even theoretically, that happiness springs from within, when one touches the quintessence of one's own being, the Ātman, and learns to live an Ātman-centred life, then he ceases to rush madly after sense-objects. When the mind is trained not to run after objects of the senses, then alone serenity is attained, and not before.

Then comes good-heartedness, which is a kind of mature innocence, which can be inferred by the evinced guilelessness and non-calculating anxiety to be of service to others. Good-hearted people are sometimes considered to be foolish, as truthful people are considered to be unintelligent. But it is a rare blessing to be good-hearted. Only good-hearted people can be truly simple and humble. In such hearts spontaneously arises divine inspiration, which is the secret of creative silence. Internal silence is the outcome of fulness of heart. When you are inwardly full, to speak is a torture. You then shun all such company or situations as will demand speaking.

This is why the Buddha said:

'If you make yourself as still as a broken gong you have attained *nirvāṇa*, for retaliation is not known to you.'[25]

St. Thomas à Kempis says in the *Imitation of Christ*:

'In silence and quietness a devout soul profiteth much and learneth the hidden sentences of scriptures, and findeth therein also many sweet tears in devotion, where-with every night she washeth her mightily from all filth of sin, that she may be so much the more familiar with God, as she is dissevered from the clamorous noise of worldly business.'[26]

That is true silence which is preceded by control of thought. External silence is of no use, it may even be harmful, if it is not preceded by thought-control. The human mind has in it almost incalculable power. And this power can be manifested and utilized most effectively for attaining self-mastery and other noble purposes, through the practice of inner silence.

According to Patanjali, regular daily repetition of the great *mantra Om* removes the distractions of the mind and quietens it, thus helping the attainment of thought control. Inner silence is then spontaneously attained.

Then, 'self-control' and 'purity of heart' are also included as austerity of the mind. Self-control here means, as indicated by Śaṅkara, a general control of the mind. By one who has attained control of his thought and emotions, general control of his mind is attained as a matter of course.

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24 *Bhagavad-Gītā* XVII. 16.

25 *Dhammapada*, 'Punishment,' Verse 134.

26 *Imitation of Christ*, Templegate, Springfield, Ill. Chapter 20, p. 30.

And purity of heart here means honesty of of purpose in dealing with people. Those who knowingly or otherwise cultivate duplicity of heart, or hypocrisy, cannot avoid internal dichotomy, which surely injures the possibility of attaining self-mastery.

Therefore Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Watch carefully that there may not be any theft in the chamber of your inner attitude.' Further, 'Make your thought, word, and action one and the same.' In other words: do not think one thing, say something else and act in a different way. In that way self-mastery cannot be attained.

We have explained, with the required varying emphases, the different items in the threefold austeritites of the body, speech and mind. And you would have noticed that in these disciplines, there is nothing recondite or outmoded. These are universally applicable and can be practised by all human beings with some effort anywhere in the world, with abundant beneficent results.

This threefold discipline when sincerely and carefully practised with reverential earnestness, staying unaffected in success and failure and unconditioned by desire for fruits, will lead on the one hand to the natural obliteration of the demoniac[27] qualities in a person and on the other to the spontaneous awakening and efflorescence of the inherent divine[28] qualities. The relish for the enjoyment of sense objects will drop off unawares. And an irrepressible vertical urge for devotedly practising higher spiritual disciplines will then take possession of him. For such an aspirant, self-realization, by the grace of God, becomes an inevitable attainment. In an absolute sense, self-realization is perfect self-mastery. Even some earnest efforts towards this attainment can transform our lives in a radical manner.

The methods of attaining self-mastery have been fully given to us by the Lord and expounded by the spiritual teachers. We also understand how important it is for human beings to attain self-mastery specially in an age of triumphant technocracy.

Those who do not practise these disciplines for attaining self-mastery cannot but decline as human beings. What will then socio-economic or technological revolution avail them? What will they do with it even if the One World becomes an administrative reality?

So the challenge is squarely before us. Those who seek to attain self-mastery can do so. But they will have to apply themselves and practise the disciplines steadily and regularly, until these become their habit patterns. Then they will fully realize the sweetness of life even in our critical times.

27 Vide: *Bhagavad-Gītā*, XVII. 4.

28 *Ibid*. XVII. 1, 2, 3.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HENRI BERGSON

Dr S. Subhash Chandra

'But open Bergson, and new horizons loom on every page you read. It is like the breath of the morning and the song of birds. It tells of reality itself, instead of merely reiterating what dusty-minded professors have written about what other previous professors have thought. Nothing in Bergson is shop-worn or at second hand.'[1]

Henri Bergson is unquestionably the most influential of the recent French philosophers. He was born in Paris on the 18th October 1859 in a Hebrew family of British-Polish origins. The Franco-German War of 1871 appears to have made a traumatic impact upon the twelve-year-old Henri. Indeed, during the next twelve or fifteen years he seems to have been obsessed by the dread of a new war that, he was convinced, would be a catastrophe even if it were won by France.[2] We learn further that in his student years he was more drawn towards mathematics and natural sciences than towards metaphysics or psychology. As a matter of fact, it was his intention to deal with the fundamental concepts of mechanics in his doctoral thesis. During the four years of basic research (1883-87), he came to the conclusion that the natural sciences never deal with the phenomenon of time itself but with an artificial entity, a sort of a hybrid of time and space. Thanks to this crucial development in his enquiries, Bergson now gravitated towards philosophy and psychology.[3]

The doctoral thesis *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience,* published in 1889, was a remarkable success ; at the early age of thirty years, the young doctor became familiar with fame. Seven years later in 1896, appeared *Matière et mémoire,* followed by the witty booklet *Le Rire* in 1900. In the same year, he was invited to occupy the chair of philosophy at Collège de France in Paris, a distinction rarely attained at the age of forty-one years. In 1907, Bergson published his monumental work *L'évolution créatrice,* which is undoubtedly one of the most widely read books of the present century. His fame spread all over the world. In 1911, he held triumphant lectures in Italy and

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[1] William James : *A Pluralistic Universe,* New York, Longmans, Green & Co., 1909, p. 265.

[2] Bergson alludes to this dread in his *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion,* Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1965, pp. 166-167. It is very likely that the later pacifism of the French philosopher is rooted in this impressionable period of his life.

[3] There is a widespread belief that the above result was itself attained in the course of a sudden and unexpected intuition and that subsequent research served only to confirm this intuition. Thus, André Maurois accounts for this intuitive discovery in the following terms : The Bergsonian philosophy 'ensues entirely out of a short and living intuition. Towards the beginning of his life, Bergson, an excellent geometrician, was persuaded to believe in the mechanistic theories then in vogue. One day—he was at that time a teacher (in a school) at Clermont-Ferrand—he explained to his pupils the theory of Zeno and his problem of Achilles and the tortoise. He continued to meditate on this curious and ancient dilemma during his walk and gained contact, by a sudden illumination, with the intuition of pure duration. The Bergsonism was born.' André Maurois : *De Proust á Camus,* Paris, Librairie Académique Perrin, 1963, p. 63. Bergson himself, on the other hand, provides us a less dramatic account of his intuition and even insists that he was 'gradually' led to abandon the mathematical and mechanistic view of time and opt for a psychological approach to duration. Henri Bergson : *Ecrits et paroles,* Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1957, Vol. I, p. 204.

Great Britain. The friendship with William James made him influential in America. In 1917 and 1918 he used this influence in persuading United States to enter in the First World War in favour of France and her allies. He was received among the 'immortals' of L'Académie francaise on the 24th January 1918. In his *Durée et simultanéité,* published in 1922, Bergson relates his philosophy with Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The League of Nations invited him to preside over the 'Commission internationale de Coopération intellectuelle' in 1923-24. The award of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1927 represented the apogee of success for him. *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion,* the last and final book of Bergson, was published in 1932. This last work testifies to an inner conversion that caused Bergson to move away from the Hebrew religion in which he was born towards the Catholic faith. However, in view of the anti-semitism unleashed by the German Nazis, Bergson decided to remain among the persecuted and die as a Jew. He died a rather lonely death on the 3rd January 1941 with just a handful of friends around him; the occupied France could not do unto this great Jew the honours due to him for fear of the Nazi wrath.

The philosophy of Bergson is paradoxically rooted in that of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), for it is the result of a repudiation of this influence. Herbert Spencer was the philosopher *par excellence* for Bergson during his student years. In 1881 Bergson obtained the degree of 'Agrégé de Philosophie' and during the two following years he became progressively aware of the inconsistencies inherent in the Spencerian philosophy of evolution. He realized that Spencer was wont to cut the reality into fragments and then to glue anew these particles into artificial components. In a word, Spencer was doing violence to the living nature of reality and thereby dealing with abstractions.[4] Thanks to this insight into the basic defect of the thought of his mentor, Bergson started exploring the phenomenon of time on his own and in the course of the next six to eight years emerged as an original thinker.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) held a powerful sway over French thinkers during the second half of the nineteenth century. Bergson seems to have been always defiantly resistent to the Kantian sweep.[5] He could not accept the agnosticism of the great German and was convinced that the thing-in-itself is not unknowable. Frequent references in his writings to George Berkeley (1685-1753) and two series of lectures on him at Collége de France seem to indicate Bergson's indebtedness to this illustrious thinker.[6] Shortly after the publication of *L'évolution créatrice* in 1907, scholars began to talk of Schopenhauer's (1788-1860) influence upon the thought of Bergson.[7] Bergson himself,

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4 Henri Bergson: *L'évolution créatrice,* Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1966, pp. X, 363-9; Henri Bergson: *Ecrits et paroles,* Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1959, Vol. II, p. 294.

5 Jean Wahl: *Bergson,* Paris, Centre de Documentation universitaire, 1965, p. 32.

6 Vladimir Jankélévitch in his *Bergson,* Paris, Librairie Flix Alcan, 1931, p. 45, writes: 'The Bergsonism is, therefore, an avowed nominalism, and one is justified in referring to its affinities with the philosophy of Berkeley.'

7 For understandable reasons, the German Schopenhauerians are particularly insistent in pin-pointing what Bergson has 'borrowed' from their master. Reference may be made to three articles by Antal, Bönke and Knudsen in the *Jahrbuch der Schopenhauer-Gesellschaft* for 1914, 1916 and 1929. Among the French Bergsonians, Albert Thibaudet in his *Trente ans de vie francaise: le bergsonisme,* Paris, Editions de la nouvelle Revue francaise, 1923, Vol. III, elaborates upon

however, cautiously denies any genuine impact of Schopenhauer on his thought. On the other hand, Bergson did not conceal his admiration of neo-vitalists like Hans Driesch, who obviously owe a lot to Schopenhauer. It is quite likely, therefore, that the thoughts of Schopenhauer clothed in the vocabulary of Driesch got smuggled inside the writings of Bergson without his being aware of it. We have already referred to the friendship that linked Bergson and William James to one another. Indeed, Bergson always had a portrait of James in his study. However, in spite of this personal attachment, Bergson was wary of admitting any direct indebtedness to his American colleague.[8]

Bergson was a great writer. He is reckoned among the best writers of French prose. He excels above all in drawing upon unexpected metaphors to clarify the intricate aspects of his thought. In the words of Albert Steenbergen, a German critic, 'Bergson's style is endowed with a clarity and an impulsive drive that are rare even in France; above all, he surprises and delights the reader of his books by the wonderful metaphors that he uses to articulate his thoughts.'[9] Quite apart from the sparkling metaphors, Bergson has a persuasive force, a knack of inducing his readers to participate in his thoughts. At times, he acquires a hypnotic spell over the reader requiring him to forget his identity and get lost into the intuitions of the philosopher.

The Bergsonian philosophy is imbued with a peculiar modesty. It lays no claims upon finality. It is avowedly open to modification, improvement, correction. Unlike many other philosophers, Bergson did not claim to have founded a system of philosophy to be accepted or rejected *in toto* by others. Quite to the contrary, he presented his thoughts as proposals to be further examined and corrected by other thinkers. He offered his theories as blueprints for further 'collective and progressive' enquiries by other thinkers.[10]

A fundamental rejection of the primacy of mathematics and an equally fundamental espousal of the 'living sciences' like biology, psychology and sociology constitute yet another outstanding feature of the philosophy of Bergson. As we have seen, Bergson himself began as a mathematician. In a way, this initial predilection for mathematics was in conformity with the traditions of French philosophy, inaugurated as they were by mathematicians like Descartes and Pascal. The rupture with mathematics ensued out of the realization that the natural sciences were dealing with artificial structures and that only immediate experience could enable us to gain access to the nature of things. Bergson observes: 'It is essential to break with mathematics, to take into account biological, psychological, sociological sciences, and to construct upon that broad base a metaphysics capable of rising to new heights by a continuous, progressive, organised effort of all philosophers associated by a common respect for (immediate) experience.'[11]

A brief reference may be made to a curious form of ambiguity in the writings

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the common points between Schopenhauer and Bergson.

[8] Jean Buitton in his *La vocation de Bergson*, Paris, Gallimard, 1960, pp. 202-3, has pointed out that the Bergsonian philosophy has thrived upon a series of negations, was stimulated by the dissent to which he was provoked by Spencer and Einstein, Fechner and Charcot, Durkheim and Loisy.

[9] Albert Steenbergen: *Henri Bergsons intuitive Philosophie*, Jena, Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1909. p. 11.

[10] Bergson: *L'évolution créatrice*, pp. X, 192-3.

[11] Bergson: *Ecrits et paroles*, Vol. I, p. 153.

of Bergson. The French philosopher seems to have shunted a lot between idealism and realism. He was full of admiration for George Berkely, who may be regarded as an idealist *par excellence.* His first book, viz. *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience,* testifies to an idealistic trend. However, his enquiries into the problems of psycho-physical parallelism embodied in *Matière et Mémoire* caused him to veer towards common sense and thereby stand nearer to realism than to idealism. It seems that this trend towards realism progressively gained ascendancy and, in a letter dated 16th August 1935, Bergson avers : 'If I had to choose between these two 'isms' (viz. idealism and realism), I shall not hesitate even an instant : it is to realism, to the most radical realism that I attach the totality of my view.'[12]

Having dealt with some of the general features of the philosophy of Bergson, we shall now delineate the core of his doctrine. Bergson, by common assent, is the philosopher of duration.[13] He seems to have inaugurated a trend of thought that sees in time the key to the nature of things. Samuel Alexander, H. G. Wells, J. W. Dunne, Albert Einstein, Whitehead and Heidegger are some of the great contemporaries who have devoted themselves to enquiries into the nature of time. Alexander and Heidegger, at least, seem to have been originally inspired by Bergson, though later on they diverged into other directions and could not accept some of the conclusions of their French colleague.

Bergson was convinced that all previous approaches to the phenomenon of time were infected by the vice of conceiving time in terms of space.[14] We think in words and the language requires that we formulate our thoughts in expressions as well defined and disparate as are material objects. We live in a world where everything stands apart, stratified, quantified, measured and allotted its own place. We are members of a world where almost everything seems to occur at its own time: we work between a certain span of time and sleep during another period of time; there is time to eat and drink and there is even a time to die. It is all quantified, consisting of regular spans of time analogous to stretches of space. If space is divided into kilometers, meters and centimeters, then time is supposed to consist of days, hours, minutes and seconds.

Time vitiated and envisaged in spatial terms is an artificial phenomenon, an abstraction necessitated by social utility. The misrepresentation of time in the categories of space facilitates social intercourse, promotes adjustment to practical needs of human existence.[15] The fluid multiplicity of time gets split into homogeneous instants on the pattern of spatial units and, in this corrupted form, it becomes a tool of social life. We are witnesses here to Bergson's affinities with American pragmatists like William James and Dewey.[16]

This pragmatic preference of action and

12 Ibid., Vol. III, p. 598.

13 Paul Jurevics in his *Henri Bergson,* Freiburg, Karl Alber, 1949, p. 182, would rather hold that Bergson is a philosopher of duration and becoming. However, any such stress upon becoming runs the risk of making out of Bergson a neo-Heracleitian, an affinity expressly rejected by Bergson himself.

14 Bergson : *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience,* Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1965, pp. VII, 55.

15 Gunther Pflug : *Henri Bergson,* Berlin, Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1959, p. 242.

16 Without concealing his sympathies for the American pragmatism, Bergson would rather maintain that his philosophy of action is but in conformity with the French genius. According to him, 'If France were to sum up on this point her philosophy and contain it in a single maxim, then she would say, I believe, that it is essential to

the resulting falsification of real time into a spatial phenomenon are rooted in the very nature of the human body. The human body is a medium of action. It is meant to accomplish whatever is useful. According to Bergson, this pragmatic bias is so overwhelming that the human body influences the consciousness in a selective manner; it presents to the consciousness only such data as are useful for the concerned situation and throws a concealing veil over all that may be irrelevant or that may impede the required response.[17] And, of course, in the human body, it is the brain that determines the pragmatic choice of our perceptions. The brain represents the organ that links the mind (*l'esprit*) with the matter. It is the seat of memory and, therefore, of consciousness. It is the brain that assures the constant adjustment of the consciousness to the varying situations and enables the mind to remain in continued touch with the external reality. In a word, 'the brain is the organ of the rapport with life (*l'attention á la vie*)'.[18] Needless to say, the brain promotes but a selective rapport that is conducive to actions useful to the concerned human being. This pragmatic selectivity reveals itself strikingly in the primacy of the present over the past and the future. We live in the present. It is the present that interests us, stimulates us to action. The past, on the other hand, is essentially ineffective. The immediate future as 'action or movement' is itself rooted in the present.[19]

And that brings us to the anti-intellectualism so very characteristic of the Bergsonian doctrine. Intelligence, according to the French thinker, is a tool of human needs. It is essentially incapable of apprehending the core of reality, for it is suited to grasp the nature of things only to such extent as is conducive to human requirements. In furtherance of the pragmatic goals, intelligence does violence to the nature of reality; it does not deal with flux and change but with artificial immobilities. Intelligence is at home in the world of space; pure duration, on the other hand, cannot be attained by it.[20]

Bergson was an avowed anti-rationalist, for he held that the nature of reality cannot be grasped by abstract concepts. Logical categories constitute strait jackets that hinder us in our quest for reality. We should approach the reality itself and then formulate whatever concepts that such immediate knowledge would supply us. In a word, it is intuition and not intelligence that would enable us to gain access to the nature of things.

Bergson has defined intuition as an extremely difficult and painful effort by which one breaks with preconceived ideas and ready-made intellectual habits in order to place oneself sympathetically inside the (core of) reality'.[21] Intuition is expressive of an agonizing effort to detach oneself from the practical life. It entails a form of self-liberation from the necessities of physical existence, a sort of a revolt against an intelligence that renders us subservient to the world of material need. Intuition lands us in the flux of reality, in change and in uninterrupted continuity; we gain access to pure duration.[22]

act as a man of thought and to think as a man of action.' *Ecrits et Paroles*, Vol. III, p. 613.

17 Bergson: *Les deux sources dela morale et de la religion*, p. 335.

18 Bergson: *L'énergie spirituelle*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1964, p. 47.

19 Bergson: *Matière et mémoire*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1965, pp. 152-3.

20 Bergson: *La pensée et le mouvant*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1966, pp. 30-31.

21 Bergson: *Ecrits et paroles*, Vol. III, p. 446.

22 Henri Gouhier maintains: 'Bergson, by defini-

For a right understanding of the Bergsonian thought, it is essential to grasp the terminological distinction between time (*temps*) and duration (*durée*). Time is duration vitiated into a spatial phenomenon. Time is quantity; duration is quality. Time is composed of instants, of simultaneities, of fragments; duration is sheer flux, a continuity bereft of interruptions, a movement unbroken by halts. Not unlike space, time constitutes a chronological stretch, a road upon which one could traverse as one would move upon a spatial length. In a word, duration is the reality of which time is an appearance.

It would, however, not suffice to describe the Bergsonian duration as sheer flux. Duration is an inner flux, a psychologically felt continuity, a movement that is within us. Bergson defines this 'duration within us' in the following terms: 'A qualitative multiplicity that bears no resemblance to number; an organic development that is, however, no growing quantity; a pure heterogeneity free of distinctive qualities. In short, the moments of inner duration are not extraneous to one another.'[23] Duration is bereft of self-capsuled instants and all simultaneity is alien to it. It is succession without reciprocal exteriority that prevails in the world of space.

Duration is a psychological phenomenon. Duration without a consciousness of it is an abstraction. Duration is perceived and lived; it is consciously felt and experienced. It consists of the totality of our experience. Indeed, Bergson equates duration with memory: 'It (duration) is memory, but not the personal memory that is extraneous to what it retains, different from the past whose conservation it assures; it is a memory intrinsic to change itself, a memory that prolongs the before in the after and prevents them from being sheer instants that appear and disappear in a present that is ceaselessly born.'[24] It is impossible to distinguish between duration and the memory that links the past instant to the present one, for duration is essentially a continuation of what is no more (i.e. a past instant) into what is now (i.e. the present instant). In other words, the memory here is not constitutive of any fund of recollections that this or that person may be having of one or the other act, event or trend. The memory signifies here a living continuity between the past and the present, a continuity so basically inherent in the duration that no sooner we detach ourselves from the world of space than we become immediately conscious of it within us: we re-call it, i.e. we have a memory of it.

Aside from this psychological 'intériorité', duration is an ontological phenomenon. In the Bergsonian scheme of things, being and duration are one and the same thing. To be is to endure and to endure is to be. Duration is the stuff of which the reality is made. The universe endures; it is a growing universe involved in a ceaseless expansion. Indeed, Bergson was convinced that God is nothing finished and entirely completed but is 'continued life, action, freedom'.[25] Conversely, space is the prototype of non-being. Immobility incarnates falsity.

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tion, regards intelligence as the faculty of knowing what does not endure, or what does not practically endure any more, and intuition as the faculty of knowing what endures.' Henri Gouhier: *Bergson et le Christ des évangiles*, Paris, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1961, p. 38.

23 *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, p. 170.

24 Bergson: *Durée et simultanéité*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1968, p. 41.

25 *L'évolution créatrice*, pp. 11, 243, 303, 249. Rightly has Merleau-Ponty observed: 'The (Bergsonian) duration is not merely change, becoming, mobility: it is being in the living and active sense

Unpredictability is yet another feature of real duration. It is in the world of space that the course of things is perfectly predictable : we can predict with an unerring accuracy not only the course of the planets of our solar system but even of other solar systems and distant galaxies. No wonder, then, that human intelligence rejoices in enquiries that would enable us to foretell with mathematical precision the things to come. No sooner, however, we wrench ourselves free of space and regain our consciousness of pure duration than we find ourselves in a realm where everything is simply unpredictable. It is ceaseless growth pregnant with unforeseeable possibilities, a creative impetus unacquainted with the monotony of repetition, an evolution instinct with surprising developments.

The Bergsonian theory of evolution, though intrinsically related to his conception of duration, has autonomous roots. Unlike duration, won as it was by intuitive self-introspection, the theory of evolution and its fraternal notion of élan vital were worked out by Bergson by painstaking researches into the results attained by biology towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries He appears to have been particularly impressed by the enquiries of August Weismann (1834-1914).

The Bergsonian élan vital or vital impulse is an inner thrust inherent in life as such. It is the primordial force that, in defiance of the descending movement of matter, has catapulted life in the world. According to Bergson, but for this inner thrust characteristic of life itself, no evolution would at all occur. Such formulae as 'struggle for existence' or 'survival of the fittest' are later developments ; indeed, they presuppose an original yearning for existence innate in life. In other words, the struggle for existence is but an expression of the primeval impetus and the fittest by their very survival testify to the victory of this élan. The matter embodies the opposing trend that impedes the self-unfoldment of the life impulse. The vital impulse, endowed as it is with a limited thrust, is incapable of surmounting all the obstacles that the matter lays in its way ; it is often forced to advance over circuitous paths, have recourse to deviations, caused to split itself in smaller parts in order to escape through the openings that it finds in the resistent matter. However, in spite of ever so many reverses or partial successes, the élan vital is essentially optimistic.[26]

Bergson was wont to compare the self-manifestation of the élan vital to an exploding shell that gets split into fragments, which in turn become explosive shells on their own and get split into further fragmentary shells and so on for an extremely long span of time. Each of these fragments represents a species on its own partaking of the original impulsive force. The hallmark of the Bergsonian evolution is, therefore, that the self-unfoldment of life occurs in a series of dissociations that are all ultimately rooted in the common life impulse. The species emerge not by virtue of a convergence of previous species but emanate from the divergence of the preceding trends of the evolution. Bergson sees herein the basic explanation for the harmony that

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of this word. Time is not merely a substitute of being ; it is understood as being in growth, and it is essential to approach being in entirety from the direction of time.' Maurice Merleau-Ponty : *Signes*, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1960, p. 232.

26 *L'évolution créatrice*, pp. 103, 269, 254-255. Ian W. Alexander in his *Bergson, Philosopher of Reflection*, London, Bowes & Bowes, 1957, p. 45, refers to the affinity of the élan vital with individual consciousness. The élan vital is no blind urge like Schopenhauer's will to live ; it is a 'supra-conscious' life impulse.

prevails between the species. This harmony is no result of subsequent reciprocal adjustments, but is to be traced back to the identical original life impulse wherefrom all the species ultimately spring. Thanks tc this common 'ancestor', all the manifold divergence and the countless struggles for existence fail to nihilate the essential harmony manifest in the evolution of species.

Dissociation and divergence from the primordial thrust of life being the *modus operandi* of the evolution, the three basic forms of life, viz. plants, animals and human beings, stand for three divergent *directions* and not just three stages of one and the same trend of life. Here Bergson is at variance with most of the philosophers of evolution who advocate the viewpoint that plants, animals and human beings have evolved in a single line and, therefore, differ from one another only in degrees. Bergson insists that we have a difference of nature and not merely of degree that distinguishes the above three outstanding forms of life from one another. As a result, it would be erroneous to maintain that the animal life has evolved out of the plant life, and that human beings have animals as their biological ancestors.[27]

These are the outstanding facets of the philosophy of Henri Bergson. It has been an influential trend of thought. Indeed, the twentieth century philosophy is inconceivable without Bergson. The French thought and literature in particular have received a new impulse from the philosopher of pure duration and creative evolution. André Maurois might be guilty of an exaggeration when he compares Bergson to René Descartes ; however, the mere fact that eminent writers like Proust, Péguy and Maurois compare their illustrious contemporary to a colossus like Descartes would suffice to prove the importance of Bergson in modern France.

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27 *L'évolution créatrice*, pp. 99, 118-119, 271, 136.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

The passage quoted in 'Onward For Ever !' occurs in *The Complete Works*, Vol. II, 1963, pp. 64-65.

The editorial deals with the adventures undertaken by man in the physical, intellectual and spiritual realms in search of knowledge or freedom. Spiritual adventure is unique in that it towers above all else, being concerned with the transcendental plane. It is open to one and all of us, since of all beings man alone has the prerogative of striving for Self-knowledge.

The article entitled 'the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' is the text of a talk by late Swami Atulananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

'Essays on Applied Religion' are designed to show in the light of the authentic spiritual teachers how to apply the teachings of essential religion in and through the struggles and problems of living for attaining qualitative self-improvement leading to self-fulfilment.

A writer of noted academic standing, Dr.

S. Subhash Chandra, M.A. (Osmania), Dr. Phil. (Cologne) presents in his scholarly article the outstanding facets of the philosophy of Henri Bergson who is 'unquestionably the most influential of the recent French philosophers'.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE LOGIC OF FAITH: BY PHILIPP SCHMAHL, Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, 16, pp. 111, 1965 price $3.50.

It is satisfying to note that a Doctor of Medicine could write a treatise on the rationale of faith in the most scholarly, analytical and logical vein. His is a challenging statement on a scientific man's search for religious faith. He offers a stimulating discussion on an age-old issue. The discussion is somewhat free from conventional dogma. Whether one is a theist, deist or atheist, the author's novel approach, together with his condensed summaries of psychological thought on the subject of immortality, as well as illustrations from the author's own medical experience, will be of great value to the serious students of theology. His is a testimony in depth from the heart of a layman for his fellow laymen. He confronted life and death at their meeting place and reflected upon its significance and value. We may not accept his conclusions but his philosophical approach and the wisdom of his vast experience must stimulate us to newer heights of speculative thinking. His advice of 'pause and reflect' may take us to the basic truth and help us achieve the peace of mind that all covet in the quiet autumn of life.

DR. S. K. NANDI

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD: SELECTED READINGS BY JAMES W. DYE AND WILLIAM FORTHMAN, Meredith Publishing Co., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, 10016, 1967 pages viii+636, price not mentioned.

The book under review is quite in tune with the spirit of the times. The world is getting closer together, thanks to science and technology. Distance has almost been annihilated. It is possible to make a journey round the globe in a couple of days. While physical distance has been overcome, mental distance has yet to be overcome. For this purpose the peoples of the world must know one another more intimately than they do now. Not to speak of differences in social systems and political ideologies, there are deep-seated misunderstandings in regard to the religions which the people in different parts of the world profess. Even within the limits of a country, religion, instead of being a cementing bond, has unfortunately served to divide the people. Much more so is it the case with regard to the people inhabitating the vast world. If better understanding of the religion of one nation by another nation can be effected by any means, it will certainly be a step in the right direction. With that end in view the compilers of this volume have given representative selections relating to six major religions. Their aim is to enable people to arrive at a correct understanding and even appreciation of religions other than their own. It is a very commendable effort and quite in keeping with the spirit of the times.

The book is divided into six parts, devoted to (1) Hinduism, (2) Buddhism, (3) Chinese Religion, (4) Judaism, (5) Christianity and (6) Islam. Under each part representative selections from the writings of classical authors and modern thinkers are given. They are carefully chosen that the reader may form a correct idea of the general trend and outlook of each religion. Thus under Part I which is devoted to Hinduism the following selections are given: seven hymns from the *Ṛg-Veda* in A. A. MacDonnell's translation, four Upaniṣads in full, *Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha* and *Muṇḍaka* in Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's translation, chapters two to twelve of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in Swami Nikhilananda's translation, Patañjali Yoga Sūtra in full in Prof. Ernest Wood's translation, Śrī Śaṅkara's *Ātmabodha* in full in Swami Nikhilananda's translation, three chapters from the Eleventh Book of *Srīmad Bhāgavatam* in Swami Madhavananda's translation and the last chapter entitled 'Farewell' from Mahatma Gandhi's Autobiography. In the Introduction to Part I there is reference to other creative Hindu thinkers such

as Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh and Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Similarly with regard to the other religions eleven selections are given to illustrate the various phases of Buddhism, twelve to elucidate the different aspects of the Chinese Religion, seven to represent Judaism, nine to convey a correct idea of Christianity in its various stages of development and nine to represent Islam. The selections are very carefully made. The English translation is done by reputed scholars in Sanskrit, Pali, Hebrew, Arabic, Persian and other languages.

In the opening preface the compilers write: 'Our aim has been to present religious orientations and not theologies. It is our opinion that these selections contribute to the appreciation of the spirit of a religious tradition. The selections have been made with a view to provide an adequate insight into the significant features of a religious orientation. The aim is to focus attention on the main trend of thought characteristic of of each religion.'

From this point of view one could wish that the selections from the *Ṛg-Veda* and the Upaniṣads had been made more representative of the monotheistic and monistic trend of thought which they unmistakably exhibit. The hymn to the Unknown God (R. V. X. 121) and the hymn in which the well-known passage *'Ekaṁ Sat viprā bahudhā vadanti, agniṁ, yamaṁ, mātariśvanam āhuḥ'* (R. V. I. 164.46) could well have been added. As regards the Upaniṣads one could wish that some passages from the *Chāndogya*, especially from chapters six and eight and the selections from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* dealing with sage Yājñavalkya's instruction to Maitreyī and Emperor Janaka had been added.

The compilers have given useful introductions at the beginning of each part and also brief notes before each section of the parts. These introductions are well-informed and accurate. In the introduction to Hinduism the compilers write: 'Western scholars often assert that the religious innovations in India during the Pre-Buddhistic period, the innovations reflected in the teachings of the Epics, the Vedantic and yogic treatises, the Purāṇas and the Tantras are so extensive as to constitute a different religion from that of the Vedic period. ... Hindus, on the other hand, point to Vedic anticipations of these developments. They observe that Hinduism is not a religion of rigid dogmas. While the Divine Spirit may be worshipped under new names, they argue that the essential quest of the Vedic period continues. In their eyes Hinduism may be compared to a great river whose identity survives despite the influx of many tributary streams. A religion, they hold, can remain both creative and tolerant of diversities without losing its identity; otherwise only fossilized faiths could endure.' That this is a very true observation will be readily admitted by every student of Hinduism.

Similarly in the brief introduction to the Upaniṣads we come upon the statement, 'the Upaniṣads are a continuation of the Vedic tradition.' This means that there is no break between the Upaniṣads and the earlier portions of the Veda as is sometimes made out by western scholars. In the introduction to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* there is the statement: 'The *Gītā* records the dialogue in which Śrī Kṛṣṇa explains why Arjuna should follow his dharma or vocation as a warrior.' This means that Arjuna by reason of his birth in the Kṣatriya caste has necessarily to take part in a righteous warfare. The brief introduction to Śrī Śaṅkara's *Ātmabodha* is an excellent summing up of Advaita metaphysics. The short introduction to *Srimad Bhāgavatam* is unexceptionable. Its defence of the erotic symbolism employed in the description of the Rāsa Krīḍā is quite correct.

On the whole, the book is a very useful addition to the literature bearing on comparative religion. Students who carry on research in this field cannot do better than study this source-book most carefully. The printing and get-up leave little to be desired.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME, MYLAPORE, MADRAS

REPORT FOR 1968-69

The Home has three sections, the High School, the Collegiate and the Technical. The Home admitted 14 boys of the Oriental School attached to Sanskrit College, Mylapore, for free boarding and lodging. The High School is entirely residential and in the College section boys staying in the Home study in Vivekananda College. The Technical institution admitted only boarders in diploma course. The post-diploma course admitted a few day-boys. There are also two primary schools under the control of the Home.

High School: It has four classes, from standards VIII to XI. The School imparts a liberal education and aims at the harmonious development of the body, mind and spirit. Great stress is laid on the formation of character along with training in self-reliance, leadership and community life. Sanskrit it taught outside school hours and all the pupils appeared for the examinations conducted by the Amara Bharati Pariksha Samiti. Total strength: 154.

Collegiate section: The total strength: Pre-University: 13; B.Sc. Degree: 29; M.A. (Sanskrit): 1; B. Tech.: 1.

Technical Institute: This section provides for the Pre-Technical course of one year and for the diploma course of two years in Mechanical Engineering. It also provides for post-diploma course in Automobile Engineering of one and a half years. Total strength of boarders: Pre-Technical: 40; First year diploma: 24; Second year diploma: 33, Post-diploma: 1. Excepting the pre-technical class there were 43 day-boys in other classes.

The Centenary Primary School, Mylapore: Total strength: 450 (boys 257; girls 193). Midday meal was provided for twenty children.

The Upper Primary School, Malliankaranai: Total strength: 150 (boys 130, girls 20). Agriculture is taught as a pre-vocational subject. In the hostel attached to the school, there were 42 boarders of whom 35 belonged to schedule castes and backward communities. One hundred pupils were given midday meals.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, SINGAPORE

REPORT FOR 1967

This Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission was started in 1928. Since then, it has been growing slowly but steadily, carrying on its plan of activities. In 1967 its activities were as follows:

Educational: The Vivekananda Tamil School were run at 38 Norris Road in the afternoon and in the morning. The enrolment was 60 boys and 50 girls in the afternoon and 115 girls in the morning sessions. The Kalaimagal Tamil School conducted in the morning had a strength of 49 boys and 109 girls.

Boy's Home: The Home at 179 Bartley road accommodated 55 boys ranging from 8 to 17 years. The boys studied in Primary and Secondary Schools. The Children's Library attached to this Home, was made good use of.

Night Class for Adults: 53 pupils studied in two Tamil classes and one English class. Many of them prepared for examination conducted by the Adult Education Board and the Ministry of Education.

Cultural: The Swamis took weekly religious classes and delivered lectures in Singapore and Malaysia. Towards the close of the period a spiritual retreat was conducted at Seremban. Interviews were given to spiritual aspirants. His Holiness Srimat Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission Visited this Centre in April. During his short stay His Holiness also visited Seremban, Ipoh, Penang and Kuala Lumpur. A few distinguished persons including some monks visited the Centre and delivered lectures at the Mission auditorium.

The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda and some important religious leaders and other festivals were observed with special programmes of puja, discourses and devotional songs.

Library and Reading Room: There were 5118 books in the Library and 34 journals and 6 dailies in the Reading Room. 2685 persons made use of the Library and Reading Room.



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